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Examining Diversity in Cable Television:
A Proposal for Linking Diversity of Content to Diversity of Ownership

March 24, 2002

Paper Submitted to the Critical and Cultural Studies Division of
AEJMC 2003 Convention, Kansas City, MO.

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Examining Diversity in Cable Television: A Proposal for Linking Diversity of Content to Diversity of Ownership

Abstract

Originally developed as a means of retransmitting and boosting broadcast signals, cable television has grown as a main component of contemporary media culture. In view of that, this paper first seeks to examine various conceptions of and views toward diversity, proceeds to argue for the need to consider diversity of content in connection with diversity of ownership, and then finally discusses implications of diversity in cable TV with respect to both political and cultural democracy.

Examining Diversity in Cable Television: A Proposal for Linking Diversity of Content to Diversity of Ownership

Introduction

Originally developed as a means of retransmitting and boosting broadcast signals in mountainous or geographically remote areas, cable television nowadays has grown as a main component of media culture in the United States, with about seventy percent of U.S. TV households subscribing to its service.[1] With the aid of such technological advancement as fiber-optic cable and satellite signal transmission, which resulted in the increased channel capacity, today there are about 300 programming networks and more than 1,000 cable operators in the nation.[2] Given this, it would be fair to say that cable television, transcending the passive role as a community antenna, has become an important cultural and political institution with regard to the well-functioning of democracy.

In view of that, the key purpose of this paper is to examine in greater depth the issue of diversity, which has been one of the most vital communications policy principles ever since the implementation of the Communications Act of 1934.[3] Specifically concerned with the paucity of scholarly work in regard to diversity in cable television and the recent wave of mergers and acquisitions in the industry, this paper argues for the need to consider diversity of content in connection with diversity of ownership.

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[1] According to the National Cable and Telecommunications Association's cable industry statistics, 69.8% of TV households subscribes to cable television service (as of July 2002). The statistical data is available online at <http://www.ncta.com/industry_overview/indStat.cfm?indOverviewID=2>.

[2] The Federal Communications Commission, *Eighth Annual Report: Assessment of the Status of Competition in the Market for the Delivery of Video Programming*, Docket No. 01-129, January 14, 2002, <http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-01-389A1.pdf>.

[3] Pub. L. No. 73-416, 48 Stat. 1064 (1934) (codified as amended at 47 U.S.C.A Secs. 151-610 (1990).

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In so doing, this paper falls into three sections. In the first section, I examine various conceptions of and views toward diversity, and I conceptualize diversity as an essential ingredient of democracy. In the second, as specifically related to cable television, I distinguish two analytical dimensions of diversity, diversity of ownership and diversity of content, and I argue for the need for linking diversity of ownership to diversity of content. Then, I use this linkage in the third section, largely from a political economy approach while simultaneously pointing out some limitations of it, to evaluate how cable television serves diversity nowadays, by utilizing some secondary statistical data and examining some important court cases.

Conceptualizing Diversity

Before examining the notion of diversity in the specific case of cable television with respect to ownership limits, it would be of importance first to review various definitions of diversity and how they are applied to communications research and regulatory considerations. As is the case with other communications policy principles such as public interest, the First Amendment, localism, universal service, and so forth, the diversity principle has also been open to various interpretations and applications. Hence, although "the promotion of diversity among media sources has been one of the oldest and most consistent of the stated goals of American media policy,"[4] it seems to appear that there is no exhaustive way of defining the term.

To begin with, diversity can be examined merely in terms of the number of media outlets. On this basis, cable television, because of its increased channel capacity and specialized programming types, has often been believed to be a more diverse medium in

[4] Allard Sicco De Jong and Benjamin J. Bates, "Channel Diversity in Cable Television," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 35 (1991), 159.

itself, especially compared to broadcast television. In an attempt to examine the levels of diversity for cable television, De jong and Bates defined diversity "in terms of the channels or program services made available to subscribers."[5] To take one further step, Levin differentiated between "absolute diversity" and "relative diversity," defining them respectively as "the number of different channel types carried by a cable system divided by the total number of channel types for the cable industry" and "the number of different channel types divided by the channel capacity of the system."[6]

Since this sort of simple definition considers neither the structure of industry with respect to the magnitude of the concentration of ownership nor the nature of programming in terms of a multiplicity of opinion and representation, there is a need to consider other aspects of diversity as well. Accordingly, as an attempt to account for the influences of economic factors, diversity has often been linked to the degree of competition in a given media market, grounded in the assumption that a competitive media market would provide the consuming public with more diverse media products and increased choices. As a result, many media scholars presented various ways of measuring the degree of competition in the media industry.[7]

Diversity, when it comes to content, understood "as heterogeneity of media content," obtaining the position of an end in itself.[8] Identifying three different dimensions of diversity: source diversity, content diversity, and exposure diversity, Napoli considers

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[5] De Jong et al., 161.

[6] See De Jong et al., 161-162.

[7] To see how various measures of competition lead to different ways of assessing diversity, refer to Barry R. Litman, "The Television Networks, Competition, and Program Diversity," *Journal of Broadcasting* 23 (1979): 393-409. Also, for a discussion of a wide variety of measuring program diversity from media economics perspectives, see Mara Einstein, "Program Diversity and the Program Selection Process on Broadcast Network Television," *FCC Media Ownership Working Group*, September 2002, which is accessible online at <http:// hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-226838A10.pdf>.

[8] Denis McQuail, *Media Performance*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 1992), 142.

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content diversity into two sub-dimensions: "format-program type" and "idea type."[9] While the former has to do with, for instance, "the range of different types of television shows a viewer can choose from during an hour of prime time,"[10] the latter is concerned with a degree to which a multiplicity of viewpoints is made available to viewers.

As to the notion of representational diversity, Robert Kubey et al., particularly concerned with demographic representation on cable, examined the 32 cable channel offerings of one typical cable system to see whether the increase in cable channels has resulted in a fairer representation of television characters in terms of race, gender and age. In this line of conception, diversity is measured in such a way as to how accurate television programs are proportionally in representing demographic groups.[11]

On the other hand, with regard to content diversity in general, it is still difficult to determine whether programs offered are diverse or not as perceived by audiences, irrespective of an increased number of channels and programming types. At one extreme, one might argue that there is no real difference among many programs provided by American commercial television.[12] For this reason, Napoli, pointing out inadequacies of previous definitions of diversity in understanding the perceived degree of diversity by audiences, presents an audience-centered approach to conceptualizing diversity. According to this alternative conception, diversity should be measured in terms of diversity as "received" and perceived by users, as opposed to producers or senders.[13]

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[9] See Philip M. Napoli, *Foundations of Communications Policy: Principles and Process in the Regulation of Electronic Media* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2001), 138-146.

[10] Napoli, *Foundations*, 138.

[11] Robert Kubey, Mark Shifflet, Niranjala Weerakkody, and Stephen Ukeiley, "Demographic Diversity on Cable: Have the New Cable Channels Made a Difference in the Representation of Gender, Race, and Age?" *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 39 (1995): 459-471.

[12] De Jong et al., 160.

[13] Philip M. Napoli, "Rethinking Program Diversity Assessment: An Audience-Centered Approach," *Journal of Media Economics* 10 (1997), 59-74.

Furthermore, the notion of diversity has also been associated with localism. As to cable television's role in fostering diversity at local levels, public access channels have been regarded as a means of encouraging civic participation and promoting diverse cultures at the local level.[14]

To summarize, the diversity principle unfolds into three dimensions. First, in an economic sense, it is understood as a regulatory rationale for promoting competition in the media market so as to provide the consuming public with as diverse products as possible. Second, in a political sense, as related to the notion of marketplace of ideas, it is intended to ensure the free flow of diverse viewpoints in media. Lastly, it is also aimed at realizing cultural pluralism, by representing race, gender and age groups fairly and maybe more importantly by offering citizens a medium for political participation and cultural expression. Particularly, the third dimension is of crucial importance when we consider diverse cultures that constitute the United States and diverse programming promised by an alternative medium, cable television, to the existing broadcast power.

Therefore, as for the centrality of diversity in communications policy, Napoli argues, "regardless of whether one takes a purely democratic theory approach or a purely economic theory approach to the marketplace of ideas, the concept still emphasizes maximizing both the number of participants in the marketplace and the range of ideas, viewpoints, and cultural perspectives available to citizens-consumers."[15] As discussed by him in greater detail, the diversity principle shows a very illustrative case of how various elements of communications policy goals overlap each other, implying that social and

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[14] For a full discussion of the history and role of public access television, see Gilbert Gillespie, *Public Access Cable Television in the United States and Canada* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975).
[15] Napoli, *Foundations*, 127.

cultural dimensions – diversity of content and representation – are inherently associated with the economic dimension – diversity of ownership.[16]

Linking Diversity of Ownership to Diversity of Content

Having examined various conceptualizations and understandings of diversity, it seems to appear that no single criterion of diversity is completely satisfactory. Although each specific way of measuring or assessing diversity (particularly, in a quantifiable manner) has its own analytical strengths, one difficulty in conceptualizing diversity in such a way is that if we consider one aspect of diversity without referring to other important aspects, we might lose an opportunity to understand diversity within a larger social, cultural, and political context in which several dimensions of it interact with each other. In other words, in order to overcome limitations of examining diversity based on functional or behavioral approach, we need to make a link by which we can inquire into how economics of media, to be more specific, industrial structures or organizations of media, have influences on their performance, with regard to communications policy goals such as diversity, localism, competition, and the like.

Perhaps, we can find one meaningful way to fill the previously mentioned gap in political economy approach in media studies, which basically asserts that economic relations in a given society are the major force in shaping the content of media.[17] As applied to diversity in media, political economy approach, grounded in the theoretical belief and supported by empirical evidence highlights the issues related to diversity of

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[16] Napoli, *Foundations*, 126.

[17] To a greater or lesser extent, various political economy approaches in critical social theories in general, critical media studies in particular are hinted by Karl Marx's claim that "in every epoch the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, that is, the class that is the ruling material power of society is at the same time it ruling intellectual power. The class having the means of material production has also control over the means of intellectual production ...." Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Selected Writings, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), 129.

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ownership.[18] According to the approach, increasing diversity of ownership is believed to lead to the increase in diversity of content.

In addition, political economy approach strives for politicizing policy discourses. For instance, in an attempt to challenge depoliticized views of diversity as related to the metaphor of "Marketplace of Ideas," Edward Herman takes one further step to ask such a question: "what type of diversity in news and news interpretation is 'meaningful'?" According to him, "*Ad hoc* empiricism tends to produce static descriptions of factors influencing the media, rather than identifying an underlying process or its larger social function," after all failing to see how economics, politics, and media are at interplay.[19]

On the contrary, Napoli states that "the expectation that increased diversity of sources leads to increased diversity of content is far from a certainty."[20] But this is near-sighted and misleading. The thing really matters in regard to the production of media content, to a great extent, has to do with the issue of who has a means of expression and who controls it. For instance, if historically marginalized individuals and groups are given a means of self-expression, it is predictable that they would provide media content in accord with their interests and identities. Seen in this regard, even if ownership diversity does not automatically guarantee content diversity, it should be regarded as a minimal safeguard for ensuring diversity. Hence, Ben Bagdikian argues, "the safest way to ensure diversity of opinion is diverse ownership."[21]

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[18] Robert McChesney's works well exemplify this line of research. See Robert W. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Time* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999). Also, for the discussion of the concentration of ownership in the media on a global scale, see Edward S. Herman and Robert W. McChesney, *The Global Media: the New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism* (New York: Continuum, 1997).

[19] Edward S. Herman, "Marketplace of Ideas Revisited: Diversity of News: Marginalizing the Opposition," *Journal of Communication* 35 (1985):135-146.

[20] Napoli, *Foundations*, 137.

[21] Ben Bagdikian, "The 50, 26, 20 ... Corporations That Own Our Media," *Extra* (June 1987), <http://www.fair.org/extra/best-of-extra/corporate-ownership.html>.

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Therefore, for example, imposing ownership limits on cable television *can* lead to the increase in diversity of viewpoints, cultural values, and programming types. With the increased diversity of ownership, programming decisions can be made based on how a given program could help a community or individuals with similar interests and identities, rather than on whether it sell more advertising or not. This way, some independent program providers or system operators can create public service and news programming, and cultural programs that are fundamentally different from those offered in the mainstream media.

Conceived in that way, structural regulation (e.g., ownership limits) appear to be a desirable communications policy strategy in promoting diversity in the media. Hence, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had decided to limit both horizontal and vertical ownership in cable television,[22] while proponents of free market argued that diversity can be greatly enhanced by the "normal mechanism of marketplace."[23] From the regulators' perspective, it is more constitutional and feasible to regulate the structure of industry as a means of realizing diversity of content since the U.S. Supreme Court prohibits the government's prior restraint of media content.[24]

In the meantime, political economy approach which stresses much the importance of ownership has its own limitations as well. If, as an extreme political economist might argue, media content would never be democratic, enjoyable, or communicative under the

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[22] See Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992, Pub. L. No. 102-385, 106 Stat. 1460 (codified in scattered sections of 47 U.S.C.).

[23] This line of argument can be found in Mark Fowler's argument for the need to deregulate the broadcast industry. He argues, if unburdened by the government regulation, free market can best serve the public interests including diversity and localism. See Mark Fowler and Daniel Brenner, "A Marketplace Approach to Broadcast Regulation," *Texas Law Review* (1982), 207-257. In fact, as confirmed by Napoli's content analysis of the FCC documents, the term "marketplace of ideas" has been often interpreted from economic perspectives, favoring the free market approach to media regulation.

[24] See *New York Times Company v. U.S.*, 403 U.S. 73 (1971); *U.S. v. The Progressive*, F. Supp. 990 (1979).

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capitalist economy in which a handful of large corporations control a means of expression, we have no way of going beyond rather than simply victimizing media users. Concerned with this dilemma, John Fiske, in his study of television, proposed an audience-empowering approach by arguing that "the power to be different is the power that maintains social differences, social diversity.... But diversity is not simply to be measured in terms of the variety of programs transmitted: *diversity of readings* is equally, if not more, important."[25] What Fiske suggests here is essentially the centrality of critical readings of media text, or critical media literacy. Political economy approach, if informed by this line of thought looking at the possible way of audience empowerment, can shed critical insights on studying various aspects of diversity related issues in media.

To reiterate, political economy approach should be better seen as an analytical framework by which we can make a meaningful link between diversity of ownership and diversity of content. By doing so, we can conceptualize structural regulation as an effective means of promoting diversity in media, rather than as the state's bureaucratic power.

Diversity and Cable Television

As mentioned at the beginning, cable television in the U.S. evolved in a social environment in which there were only three broadcast networks and their distribution to the TV households was often hampered by natural and geographical obstacles. Because of cable television's advanced technology in delivering clear picture in its initial stage and increased channel capacity later on, it has been seen as an alternative medium to broadcast television. For instance, situating cablecasting within the historical context of

[25] John Fiske, *Television Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 319.

power struggle against broadcasting, Edward Dolan argues that cable, due to its enhanced channel capacity, can become a true marketplace of ideas.[26]

Similarly, Le Duc states, "in the 1960s, with the increased capacity of cable systems and the advent of program importing services promoting the growth of cable, many public interest groups saw in cable the potential to bypass the technological limits of broadcasting and significantly increase the diversity of media sources available to the American public."[27]

The growth of cable through the importation of distant signals was viewed as competition by local broadcast stations. Responding to broadcast industry's economic woes, the FCC placed restrictions on the ability of cable systems to import distant television signals. As a result of these restrictions, there was a "freeze" effect on the development of cable systems in major markets, lasting into the early 1970s.[28] FCC rulemaking, throughout the 1960s, in fact, was designed primarily to protect big city broadcasters' economic interests at the expense of small market residents' rights of accessing diverse programs.[29] This historical phase tells us how certain legislative and regulatory decisions can promote or deter the development of technologies. Further, it also shows that how different stakeholders in communications policy employ policy principles as sort of rhetorical tools to defend their position and maximize their interests. For instance, broadcasters called for the government intervention into cable regulation grounded on the public interest and localism principles.

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[26] Edward Dolan, *TV or CATV? A Struggle for Power* (New York: Associated Faculty Press, 1984).

[27] Don R. Le Duc, *Cable Television and the FCC: A Crisis in Media Control* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 73.

[28] See Parsons and Frieden, 42-43.

[29] Parsons and Frieden, 43

The freeze on cable's development lasted until 1972, when a policy of gradual cable deregulation led to modified restrictions on the importation of distant broadcast signals.[30] Unburdened by the government regulation, coupled with the advent of the first pay-TV network, Home Box Office (HBO) and the development of national satellite distribution system, in the 1970s, there had been a significant increase in cable subscribers. In addition, the government began to consider cable as a form of public forum and means of enhancing civic participation. As a result, regarding the future of cable television, utopian views or so-called "Blue Sky" visions began to prevail.[31]

> [T]he stage is being set for a communications revolutions … audio, video, and facsimile transmissions … will provide newspapers, mail service, banking and shopping facilities, data from libraries and other storage centers, school curricula and other forms of information too numerous to specify. In short, every home and office will contain a communications center of a breadth and flexibility to influence every aspect of private and community life.[32]

Considering the talk about cable television in the policy arena as a discursive practice, Streeter argues that in the 1970s, utopian talk about cable television treated cable as an autonomous technology while not paying attention to political and economic conditions in which such technology is introduced and developed.[33] Although Streeter's analysis is very insightful in demystifying the sort of uncritical and naïve utopian view toward cable television, it is not entirely satisfactory to answering such an issue of what kind of different political and cultural values cable television brought to the U.S. homes.

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[30] See Parsons and Frieden, 48-49.

[31] For a discussion about the utopian talk in regards to cable television's future, see Thomas Streeter, "Cable Fable Revisited: Discourse, Policy, and the Making of Cable Television," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 4 (1987): 174-200.

[32] Ralph Lee Smith, "The Wired Nation," *The Nation* (18 May 1970): 582. Cited in Thomas Streeter, "Blue Skies and Strange Bedfellows: *The Discourse of Cable Television" in The Revolution Wasn't Televised: Sixties Television and Social Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1999): 221.

[33] In a similar vein, Parsons also argues for the need to situate the development of technology and according policy discourses essentially contingent upon the power dynamics of a given historical period. For a further discussion on this, see Patrick Parsons, "Defining Cable Television: Structuration and Public Policy," *Journal of Communication* 39 (1989): 10-26.

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In view of that, Pool's analysis seems to be more illuminating. Avoiding both utopian and dystopian views toward the future of cable television around the 1970s, he investigates to what extent and in what specific ways cable television can encourage citizen participation, raise the level of culture, and provide education and services to the public. For example, cable television offers more diverse programs, both in terms of the number of channels and the nature of programming, to viewers. Also, it can provide opportunities to such audiences who are not able to afford access to sports arena, movie theater, concert hall, and so forth.[34]

Pointing out cable television's potential as a counter-power to the existing large broadcasting corporations, Raymond Williams also states, "We are already able to see, from some publicly financed local experiments, that cable technology could alter the whole social and cultural process of televised communications."[35] However, according to him, the degree to which cable as an alternative medium realizes its potential on a full-scale ultimately depends on the public's engagement in the shaping of its form and content.

Even though cable television has been traditionally regarded as a highly commercialized medium, it should also be noted that diverse programs, whether they be entertaining or informative, provided by cable television constitute an essential ingredient of our daily life nowadays. Therefore, one valuable way to assess the performance of cable television would be of what kind of diverse political and cultural programs it offers to the public. As mentioned earlier, cable television, because of its increased channel capacity, at least in a theoretical sense, can provide viewers with more diverse

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[34] Ithiel de Sola Pool, ed. *Talking Back: Citizen Feedback and Cable Technology* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1973).

[35] Raymond Williams, *Television and Cultural Form*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1990), 141.

programming and viewpoints. Empirical research also confirms this point. According to Kieschnick and McCullough, cable subscribers seek more diverse sources of video programming than non-subscribers do.[36]

With regard to cable's role in promoting diversity and civic participation at local levels, John Dryzek's political theory would be of help. He states, "Democracy should be pluralistic in embracing the necessity to communicate across difference without erasing difference, reflexive in its questioning orientation to established traditions."[37] What he argues by this is essentially the centrality of diversity and corresponding civic participation in the process of public deliberation. With regard to the role of communication, he goes on to argue that "a conception of democracy [should emphasize] the construction of public opinion through the contestation of discourses and its transmission to the state via communicative means."[38] Based on this conceptualization of democracy, we can reasonably deduce that cable television, public access channels in particular can and should play a key role in facilitating civic participation at local levels.

> A concern for political democracy, then, is matched by another constitutional goal every bit as important to American society, and that is cultural democracy, the broadest possible participation in the cultural processes that define and redefine the sort of society we shall be. This form of life – an ideal not yet fully realized – demands not only a public discourse that nourishes political democracy, but also a healthy local discourse that nourishes cultural democracy.[39]

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[36] Robert Kieschnick and B.D. McCullough, "Why Do People Not Subscribe to Cable Television" A Review of the Evidence," A Paper presented to 1998 TPRC <http://www.tprc.org/abstracts98/kieschnick.pdf> November 15, 2002.

[37] John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

[38] Dryzek, 4.

[39] Kenneth L. Karst, "The Privatization of Our Public Discourse: Essay Local Discourse and the Social Issues," *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* 12 (2000), 27.

Yet the issue of to what extent and in what specific ways cable television can or did contribute to the foregoing ideal remains very much an open question, leading us to assess its performance empirically.

Assessing Diversity of Ownership in Cable Television

In the previous section, I briefly discussed democratic potentials of cable television in fostering civic participation and offering diverse cultural expression and representation. Then, based on the recognition that ownership limits in cable television are a minimal safeguard and drawing upon some secondary statistical data, this section seeks to assess the current state of ownership diversity in cable television, especially in the aftermath of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.[40] Among many legal and regulatory issues pertinent to diversity of ownership in cable television, horizontal/vertical cable ownership limits, aimed at ensuring greater diversity of ownership, stand to the fore.

In the *Time Warner* decision issued on March 2, 2001 by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit,[41] the court determined that the FCC's prior limits had not been adequately supported and that the FCC had not sufficiently considered changes that have occurred in the multichannel video programming distribution (MVPD) market. In response to the decision, FCC issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking[42] to review its horizontal and vertical limits for cable companies, offering a summary of regulatory history related to cable ownership limits.

Initially, the 1992 Cable Act directed the FCC to set up limits on the number of subscribers a cable operator may serve (horizontal limit) and on the number of channels a

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[40] Telecommunications Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (to be codified at scattered sections of 47 U.S.C.).

[41] See *Time Warner Ent. Co. v. FCC*, 240 F. 3d 1126 (DC Cir. 2001).

[42] See Commission's Cable Horizontal and Vertical Limits and Attribution Rules, MM Docket No. 92-264, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 01-263, 2001.

cable operator may devote to affiliated programming (vertical limit). The FCC implemented such rules in 1993. According to the ownership rules, horizontal ownership limit prohibits any cable operator from serving more than 30 percent of cable subscribers across the nation. At the same time, vertical ownership limit keep one cable company from having any ownership affiliation with more than 40 percent of the programming that it carries on any of its cable systems with up to 75 channels. On any system with over 75 channels, 45 channels are mandated to be reserved for nonaffiliated programming.[43]

Traditionally, the cable industry's response to government regulation has been grounded in the defense of their First Amendment rights, arguing that cable operators are essentially an electronic publisher who has the rights of deciding what to carry on their signals.[44] In addition, as to FCC's demand of diversity principle, their main defense has been that if cable operators are given a freedom to select channels, it would lead to increased diversity. Although cable companies' reliance on the First Amendment rights, in a sense, does make some sense, especially considering the fact that they, unlike broadcast television, are not given free spectrum which logically lead to broadcasters' obligation to the public interest. However, in another sense, it is unreasonable to claim that the increased ownership could still serve diversity without offering any plausible empirical evidence. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, there is another misconception in their argument in that a multiplicity of outlets (e.g., cable channels) does not necessarily result in diversity of content, whether it be an idea, opinion, cultural value, opinion, and the like.

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[43] Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 01-263, 2001.

[44] *Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. v. FCC*, 114 S.Ct. 2445, 1994 (Turner I); *Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. v. FCC*, 117 S.Ct. 1174, 1997 (Turner II).

A recent industry survey conducted by the FCC shows an increasing economic tendency of ownership concentration. Although the cable industry is comprised of thousands of local cable operators and scores of national Multiple System operators (MSOs),[45] today, in the deregulated cable industry, the top ten MSOs control nearly 85 percent of cable systems while by 1998, the top ten MSOs controlled the lines into 71 percent of cable subscribers (See Table 1).[46] This economic tendency shows that a handful of cable giants are capable of controlling distribution of cable programming while favoring affiliated programming networks.

Table 1: Market Share of MSOs: 1998-2001

	1998	2001
Top 10	71.04	84.29
Top 25	80.99	89.70
Top 50	86.08	91.38

* Source: FCC, *Eighth Annual Report*.

For instance, the second largest MSO (after the approval of Comcast's acquisition of AT&T cable division), AOL Time Warner has financial interests in more than 20 programming networks including CNN, Cartoon Network, TNT, TBS, HBO, just to name a few. In this industrial structure, it is easy to notice that among 234 programming networks, independent networks that are not affiliated with cable MSOs are at competitive disadvantages. In fact, among the top 20 programming networks as ranked by number of subscribers, there are only 2 unaffiliated programming services.[47]

Another longitudinal research done by FCC also confirms that a general tendency of ownership concentration in the media industry. The main research finding is that while

[45] Parsons and Frieden, 120.
[46] FCC, *Eighth Annual Report*
[47] FCC, *Eighth Annual Report*.

the number of media outlets has been significantly increasing, the number of owners including both big and small independent companies has been slightly increasing.[48]

In turn, as to the issue of content diversity, in terms of representational diversity on cable, Kuby et al.'s content analysis of programs on 32 cable channels reveals that despite the creation of scores of new cable television channels, there has been no evidence of more accurate proportional representations of historically underrepresented demographic groups such as racial minorities, females, senior citizens, and so forth.[49] In addition, Blumer et al.'s research also shows that despite the increased the marketplace for programming due to the increase in networks and cable systems, there is no evidence of individual producers' increased freedom of expression, implying that no increased program diversity for the consuming public.[50]

Therefore, although the 1996 Act was intended to promote competition and diversity in media, the recent wave of media mergers and acquisitions leads us to doubt about its actual effects. A very recent mega merger between Comcast and AT&T broadband just deepens public's concern about the conglomeration of ownership. According to the Associate Press news, Comcast became the largest cable operator in the United States as a result of its acquisition of AT&T's cable division.[51] The FCC Chairman, Michael Powell, in finalizing the AT&T-Comcast merger case, states, "The benefits of this transaction are considerable; the potential harms negligible. We therefore

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[48] Scott Roberts, Jane Frenette and Dione Stearns, "A Comparison of Media Outlets and Owners for Ten Selected Markets: 1960, 1980, 2000," Media Ownership Working Group, FCC. <http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-226838A2.txt>.

[49] Kubey et al.

[50] See Jay G. Blumer and Carolyn M. Spicer, "Prospects for Creativity in the New Television Marketplace: Evidence from Program-Makers," *Journal of Communication* 40 (1990): 78-101.

[51] Bill Bergstrom, The Associated Press, "Comcast Finalizes AT&T Broadband Deal," *Centre Daily Times*, 19 November, 2002, B9.

conclude that the merger serves the public interest, convenience, and necessity."[52] Regarding this, it is natural for big media giants not to talk much about merger cases. "That's the word from Disney-owned ABC and AOL/Time Warner-owned CNN, where both sides weren't thrilled by how the merger and their respective sides came off looking."[53]

Predictably, the result of deregulation in ownership is: "News departments get reduced and culturally diverse and public interest programming comes under pressure. Less popular programming disappears and journalists are evaluated by the corporate-profit-center logic of these huge organizations."[54] Thus, the mere fact of outlet multiplicity does not signal the presence of democracy. Diversity in cable television is undemocratic to the extent it is controlled by a few gigantic oligopolists. On the other hand, diversity can be democratic to the extent that there is an environment for a fair competition and there is a wide range of competent views and programs available to viewers.

Conclusion

Having examined how concentration of ownership prohibits a multiplicity of information sources and viewpoints, it would be fair to conclude that the issue of ownership diversity in cable television becomes much more important than ever. In this paper, I argued for the need to link diversity of ownership to diversity of content informed by political economy approach and supported by some empirical evidence. Certainly, such a linkage

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[52] Michael Powell, Separate Statement, <http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-228446A2.pdf>.

[53] Peter Johnson, "ABC, CNN Try to Keep Merger News Quiet," *USA Today*, 19 November 2002, 3D.

[54] Mark Cooper, cited in Neil Hickey, "Unshackling Big Media," *Columbia Journalism Review*, Sept/Oct 2002.

should be conceived neither in terms of a simple linear cause-and-effect relationship nor a purely economic account.

In the wake of the deregulatory turn in the cable industry, the discussion on the nature of diversity in cable television directs us to pay close attention to rethinking of the medium and associated regulatory justification. Considering the recent spate of mergers and acquisitions in the cable industry in the aftermath of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, it becomes of utmost importance to reexamine the foundations of the current deregulatory communications policy. An increasing concentration of ownership would offer no help in making cable television more diverse, and offers little chance of expanding the public sphere. Therefore, it is my conclusion that the ownership provisions of telecommunications regulation that are in danger of disappearance or relaxation should remain active.

As discussed earlier, diversity in communications policy inherently involves a wide range of political, social, and cultural issues that are so often intermingled with each other. Given this, one meaningful way to pursue the issue of diversity in cable television would be how to realize the normative ideals of participatory and cultural democracy by virtue of an alternative medium to broadcast television. As cable television, with the help of such new technologies as satellite and digital broadband, expands its horizon, many more new regulatory issues will emerge and consequently there is a need for media scholars to revisit the promises of cable television, with a critical look at them.

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The Agency: Naturalizing Terrorism

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Introduction

Well before the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, terrorism was already a hot topic on television dramatic programs. But since 9/11 even more shows have been using terrorism as a plot device including *JAG*, *The West Wing*, *Law and Order* and *Without a Trace*. This fall several new shows are on the network schedule specifically spotlighting the war on terrorism. Networks are already heavily promoting two of those upcoming dramas: ABC's *Threat Matrix* and NBC's *Bungalow 5*.

I believe the emphasis on terrorism as a plot device on television dramatic programs has naturalized terrorist activity on US soil, presenting attacks as inevitable and, indeed, already occurring on a regular basis. The treatment of terrorism on television emphasizes the vulnerability of the US to terrorist attacks, perpetuates stereotypes by stressing personal rather than ideological motivation to terrorists, reinforces the government's call for American citizens to remain vigilant, and glorifies the role of government agencies in combating terrorism. In short, the terrorism plot device plays on the fears of the audience after 9/11 about the safety of the country, at the same time, justifying government policy in the war on terrorism.

Methodology

In this study I examine the discourse around terrorist acts found in the recently cancelled CBS series *The Agency*. While most of the plots on this dramatic program depict terrorism, I have analyzed the two episodes from the past season that depict acts of terrorism within the United States. I selected this series because of its claims to portray the inner workings of the CIA. But perhaps even more significantly, the series boasts an

unusual amount of cooperation between the producers and the CIA, thus presenting an interesting case study for examining the convergence between dramatic representation of terrorism on television and government policy.

In *Media Matters*, John Fiske defines discourse as:

> language in social use; language accented with its history of domination, subordination, and resistance; language marked by the social conditions of its use and its users: it is politicized, power-bearing language employed to extend or defend the interests of its discursive community. (Fiske, 1994, 3)

Discourse analysis, according to Fiske, examines "what statements were made and therefore what were not, who made them and who did not" and "the role of the technological media by which they were circulated." (1994, 3) Fiske writes, "Discourse can never be abstracted from the conditions of its production and circulation in the way that language can." (Fiske, 1994, 3)

In *Television Culture*, Fiske describes discursive power as "the power to make common sense of a class-based sense of the real." (1987, 42) Discourse "is not only a product of culture, it is also, in industrialized societies at least, the product of society, and the power of political relations within that society." (1987, 42) The process of naturalization involves the "'repression of its own operations,' that enables it (discursive power) to present itself as common sense, as an objective, innocent reflection of the real." (1987, 42) Fiske insists that examining the sources of messages must be a crucial part of the analysis of this process:

> So, as critics, we must never be content with asking and revealing what view of the world is being presented, but must recognize that someone's view of the world is implicitly or explicitly, obviously or subtly, inscribed within it. Revealing the *who* within the *what* is possibly the most important task of criticism. (1987, 42)

Heather Hundley used discourse analysis to demonstrate how the sitcom, Cheers, "naturalized beer drinking, presenting it as a normal, natural everyday activity," actually

minimizing any dangers associated with excessive drinking through the strategies of humor, camaraderie and detoxification.(Hundley, 1998, 264) Similarly, in this study I analyze two episodes of *The Agency* for its discourse on terrorism and explore the level of cooperation between the producers and the CIA.

Terrorism as Television Entertainment

The Agency premiered on CBS shortly after September 11, 2001. The show is about CIA operatives working out of Langley. According to the CBS website for the series "The mission of this formidable group is to combat terrorism, nuclear threats, biological warfare and any and all assaults on the United States." (CBS.com) In its two years on the air, the show never found a sufficiently large audience, moving from its original Thursday night slot opposite *ER* to Saturday night and also going through several cast reconfigurations. By the end of the first season, Beau Bridges played the director of the CIA and Daniel Benzali played Robert Quinn, the Director of Homeland Security. The show's failure to return in the fall will strand in television limbo one of the operatives who was kidnapped in the season finale cliffhanger. As is the trend with so many shows today, most of the plots are a jumbled play on current events from the headlines. Right after the United States invaded Iraq in March, 2003, for example, the plot was about al-Qaida terrorists cheating IRA gunrunners.

At the same time *The Agency* premiered, two other prime time dramas were introduced chronicling the adventures of the CIA and its agents: *24* on Fox and *Alias* on ABC. Before *24* and *The Agency* even made it to the air, the attacks of September 11 shut down regular broadcasting. In the immediate wake of the attacks, the networks displayed extreme sensitivity to the possibility of offending or upsetting viewers with

shows that made even obscure references to terrorism. Twentieth TV pulled a *Simpson* rerun showing Homer's car illegally parked in front of the World Trade Center. CBS pulled a reference from the sitcom *Ellen* to the collapse of an on-line business fearing sensitive reaction to the word "collapse" as well as the mother's response, "Oh, well, thank your lucky stars you weren't there at the time." (Flint, 2001, B.9) TV Land cancelled a scheduled *Get Smart* rerun about a hijacking. (Ostrow, 2001, F.05) And NBC cancelled a planned *Law and Order* miniseries about a bioterrorist attack on New York. (James, 2001, 2.1)

In response to 9/11, producers made immediate changes in the spy shows. Producers of *24* quickly removed shots of a terrorist jumping from an exploding plane in both the promos and the episode. For *The Agency*, the pilot episode about terrorism was pulled. In the original pilot, the CIA worked to prevent Middle Eastern terrorists linked to Osama Bin Laden from bombing Harrods department store in London. (Salamon, 9/29/01, A.17) While CBS had tested this episode on a focus group before 9/11, the network judged it inappropriate for airing afterwards and postponed it, running instead an episode in which the CIA prevents the assassination of Fidel Castro by his own men. Producers quickly reworked the pilot, removing specific references to Osama bin Laden and Harrods and setting the threatened terrorist attack in some vague location in Europe. This version of the show aired on November 1. (James, 2001, 2.1) In another episode of *The Agency* that had already been shot in August writers anticipated the anthrax attack that occurred in October of that year. This show was rescheduled twice and eventually ran on November 8. Of course, once the immediate shock of 9/11 wore off, so did network sensitivity to dramatizing disturbing events. As *Agency* executive producer

Shaun Cassidy said later, "We very quickly realized that avoiding world events was not what people wanted and was not where our responsibility lies." (Owen, 2002, C.6)

The two episodes that I am analyzing feature terrorist acts in the United States. "Home Grown," which aired November 2, 2002, is about a cadre of American suicide bombers. One blows up an amusement park in Washington, D.C., killing 18 and injuring 52. The CIA works with the FBI to stop the other bombers before they can blow up a federal building and a military facility. (Kahn, 2002) "Soft Kills" aired March 15, 2003, just days before U.S. troops invaded Iraq. In this episode, the CIA, again working with the FBI, tries to prevent Middle Eastern terrorists from murdering the wives and families of servicemen at Fort Campbell in Kentucky. Their husbands are on assignment with the NATO Anti-Terrorist Force organized by the Spanish Ministry of Defense after serving in Afghanistan. Terrorists kill two women and a child and injure two women. (Moskowitz, 2003)

Naturalizing the Inevitability of Future Terrorist Attacks

Both episodes naturalize the warnings of the US government about the inevitability of future terrorist attacks on the US. In fact, *The Agency* depicts an America already under terrorist assault even though there were no terrorist attacks within the US either in 2002 or in 2003. (Donnelly, 2003, A.1) Before 9/11, the U.S. had already seen terrorist acts committed against its interests in foreign countries. These included bombings of the US military barracks in Saudi Arabia in 1996, of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and of the USS Cole in 2000. But the attacks on September 11 brought the country to the realization that terrorist acts such as suicide bombings could become a reality here as well as in the Middle East and other parts of the world. Since 9/11 government

officials have repeatedly emphasized the likelihood of another terrorist attack in this country, passing the USA Patriot Act, establishing an office of Homeland Security, and moving the country in and out of different color-coded levels of terrorist alert. In May 2002, FBI director, Robert Mueller, told the National Association of District Attorneys that "There will be another terrorist attack. We will not be able to stop it. It's something we all live with." (Meyer, 2002, A.1) In 2003 he testified there were several hundred al-Qaida Islamic militants in the US and that "Our greatest threat is from al-Qaida cells in the US that we have not yet been able to identify." (Words of CIA, 2003, A.18) Mueller is part of a group also including Attorney General John Ashcroft and CIA Director George Tenet who brief President George W. Bush when he's at the White House from "The Daily Threat Matrix," a report formally known as "Terrorist Threats to U.S. Interests Worldwide." (Anderson, 2003) The American public anticipates further terrorist attacks in the United States. A CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll conducted May 19-21, 2003 indicated 57% of Americans believe terrorists will strike in the United States this summer. (Moore, 2003)

Preparation against further acts of terrorism is certainly a reasonable public policy after 9/11. But on another level, television shows that constantly create dramatic visions of possible terrorist scenarios may serve to exaggerate the public's perception of the likelihood of attack and may well increase the level of fear. In "Homeland," after the attack on the amusement park, one operative asks another, "What's the mood of the country?" The other responds, "Scared. Half the population called in sick; the rest are either dazed or joined the hunting party." Well before 9/11, John Fiske stated in *Media Matters* in 1994 that he believes the United States was already exhibiting "clear traces" of

totalitarian rule. He was using the phrase in the sense that Anthony Giddens defines the term as "an adjective that should be applied not to states themselves, but to their tendential properties that lead to a type of rule within them." (Fiske, 1994, 240) To Giddens' list of elements of totalitarianism ("focusing on surveillance," "moral totalism," "terror," and "prominence of leader figure"), Fiske adds fear which he now sees as "a persistent feature of life in the contemporary United States." (1994, 241) On the policy level, the United States response to terrorism after 9/11 was quick and fear-driven and has since given many civil libertarians pause. The USA Patriot Act passed 357-66 in the House and 98-1 in the Senate and gave broad powers to the federal government to enhance surveillance procedures relating to terrorism. As Robert L. Barr, Jr., a consultant to the American Civil Liberties Union noted recently:

> People now have had a chance to digest what happened on 9/11 and the government response to it, and more and more people are realizing that the government is using the fear of terrorism as a rationale to take away our privacy and our civil liberties. (Parker, 2003, C01)

Naturalizing the Vulnerability of the US to Terrorist Attacks

One of the ways *The Agency* naturalizes the inevitability of future terrorist attacks is by emphasizing the vulnerability of the US to terrorist attack. The victims, depicted as helpless and innocent, stand in for the audience as potential targets of terrorism. Powerlessness is demonstrated both through graphic dialogue and visual images. In "Homeland," one of the CIA operatives quotes the al-Qaida training manual from memory: "Exploit the enemy's fear of death and love of life. Demoralize him. Strike where he is most vulnerable: his economy, his culture, his family." Both episodes illustrate this quote with dramatic scenarios meant to shock the audience.

The opening of "Homeland" depicts a man with a backpack entering an amusement park. The camera stays behind him. The subsequent editing emphasizes the small helpless children in his path. Rather than seeing his face, the audience sees two strong reaction shots: one of two cute little girls and a dolly in on a small black boy. All three children are warily watching the man. In the next shot, an amusement park employee asks the man to remove his backpack for inspection and the audience sees the man's face for the first time in a sweaty close-up. He looks American and he suddenly pulls a ripcord, detonating a bomb.

In "Soft Kill," the depiction of attacks on the military wives also emphasizes the innocence of the victims and the horror of the violence. A suburban mom pulls into her driveway with her young daughter. As the woman leaves the car a man with a knife suddenly attacks her. The child, who has already gone into the house, comes back to the door. The assailant leaves the mother on the lawn and runs menacingly towards the little girl when the wounded mother pulls a gun from her purse and shoots the terrorist several times. The mother survives, but, unfortunately, other victims of this cell have not been so lucky. The operatives reinforce the innocence of the other victims by showing graphic crime-scene photos. The operatives personalize the victims, calling them by name and describing their attacks. "Helen O'Brian, shot in her living room. Trisha Shapiro, teacher. She was coming home from school with a mushroom pizza for dinner. Her eight-year-old son was with her. They shot him in the head." One of the final shots in this episode shows a woman alone, raking her yard, as a floral deliveryman holding a knife under a bouquet moves menacingly toward her. Some of the impact of these scenes comes from the audience's awareness of last summer's murders at Fort Bragg. Two

soldiers just back from duty in Afghanistan murdered their wives and then shot themselves and two other military husbands murdered their wives. (Cockburn, 2002, 8) This kind of play with recent events diverts the audience from consideration of the very real and serious social issue of the possible negative effects war duty has on servicemen and simply emphasizes our helplessness against terrorists.

Naturalizing Personal Rather than Ideological Motivation for Terrorism

The two episodes clearly reject the possibility that terrorists might act out of deep ideological commitment by emphasizing psychological reasons for their discontent. This fits American stereotypes and television's propensity to provide simple dramatic motivation for the actions of characters. The shows depict terrorists finding willing recruits from the misfits of American society, perhaps even making a statement about the lower classes in America. The American bombers in "Homeland" are easily manipulated by a terrorist feeding them "a few pat phrases." The suicide bomber is on welfare and spent his time visiting porn cites on the web. His parents supply the excuse that when he was a child he lost his hair due to chemotherapy for Hodgkin's disease causing other children to laugh at him. When the FBI agent carries this idea to its logical conclusion suggesting that the cancer might have returned, the parents reject this idea vehemently. Still, the FBI's explanation resonates with viewers because no other explanations are offered. The suicide bombing on the amusement park is thus stripped of any ideological motivation and reduced to personal problems.

A second terrorist who unsuccessfully attempts to bomb a federal building is an African American, recruited while in prison, who has changed his name to Asud Abin Hassid and converted to Islam. The operatives dismiss him as a "thug with pretensions of

being an ideologue," acting out his anger at "racist imperialists." The third bomber is a 17-year-old baby-faced boy, an alienated youth who's been arrested twice, has no parental guidance, admires the shooters at Columbine, and supports "anyone who's oppressed." All three terrorists have been lured by the promise of a $100,000 payment to their families, reminiscent of Saddam Hussein's gifts of "humanitarian aid" in the form of money to the families of suicide bombers.

The terrorists in "Soft Kill" are identified as Middle Eastern, trained at al-Qaida camps. Providing just that much information short-circuits the writers' obligation to provide any motivation other than revenge. The audience learns very little about the captured terrorist. The CIA locates his mother and three sisters in Yemen and he says to Quinn, "You invaded our land. You killed our women and children." The operatives find his list of the names and addresses of his victims hidden in his Koran. This lack of tangible information precludes any discussion about terrorist ideology or anti-American grievances and, instead, substitutes easy stereotypes of Arabs that have been firmly ingrained in American media for some time. Jack Shaheen, author of *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, identifies the "stock images of the three B's for the Arab character: billionaire, bomber and belly dancer." (Ahmed, 2001, 12A) Karim Khudairi of the Interfaith Committee of the Islamic Council of New England says, "all anyone sees on television about Arabs is that we are terrorists." (Koh, 2002, 1) President Bush has consistently said that this war on terrorism "is not a war against Islam, but against a bunch of criminals" and has asked the media to identify terrorists by their organization or the country that uses them rather than as Islamic or Muslim. (Hanley,

2001) But in both episodes, terrorists are identified as Middle Eastern or as Americans who have converted to Islam and changed their names.

Naturalization of Government's Call for American Citizens to Exercise Vigilance

Both episodes clearly implicate the dupes whose cluelessness and naivete allow them to become unwitting accomplices of terrorists, thus reinforcing the government's warnings to American citizens about their obligation to remain vigilant in the war on terrorism. The parents whose account was fattened by $100,000 from Dubai thirty minutes after the amusement park bombing believed their son's explanation that the money was payment for work he did with an old army buddy who'd made a fortune in a dot com company. The mother and father, nicknamed "Ma and Pa Kettle" by Quinn, are portrayed as weaklings like their son; the father is out of work and the mother has multiple sclerosis. Similarly, the mother of the seventeen-year-old bomber is amazed that her son is hiding a bomb in his bedroom (reminiscent of the some recent high school violence cases) or that her bank account has just increased by $100,000.

"Soft Kill" illustrates how easily even the well educated and sophisticated can be manipulated to cooperate with terrorists. In this episode, the wife of the Spanish deputy minister of defense, described as "an overeducated high society half-baked radical," steals the classified names and addresses of the targeted wives of the US military personnel from her husband. She turns them over to a "so-called journalist," who, in turn, sells the list to a mid-level terrorist in Sudan and it's unclear if she understands the damage she has done. The writers emphasize the dangers of entertaining radical ideas by giving the wife a suspicious background including membership in the Communist party and a father who was murdered for trade union activities during the Franco regime. She

has demonstrated against American policy on Iraq, signed an open letter protesting treatment of al-Qaida prisoners on Guantanamo, and traveled on a friendship mission to Afghanistan while the Taliban was in power. Both episodes laboriously make the point that the audience must remain vigilant in this war on terrorism, suspicious of others--even family members. Here the wife's treachery causes her clueless husband to lose his prestigious job in the Spanish ministry.

Both episodes reinforce the strategy of our own government after September 11 to warn to be alert for suspicious activities and to be observant of surroundings and neighbors. Anyone of these dupes could have saved precious lives simply by paying attention. President Bush in his "let's roll" speech of November 10, 2001, said:

> A terrorism alert is not a signal to stop your life. It is a call to be vigilant, to know your government is on high alert, and to add your eyes and ears to our efforts to find and stop those who want to do us harm. (Hua, 2001, 17)

A spokesman for the Justice Department, Mark Corallo, said: "Any time a citizen feels that they have witnessed something suspicious, we want them to notify the appropriate authorities. Citizen vigilance is an essential part of the fight against terrorism here at home." (Crary, 2001, A3) The Justice Department initiated Operation TIPS, encouraging postal workers, truckers, train conductors, and utility employees to report any suspicious activities to authorities, leading one ACLU opponent to accuse the government of recruiting "one million volunteers to act as spies and informants against their neighbors." (Crary, 2001, A3)

Naturalizing the Role of the CIA in Combating Terrorism

Both episodes are open ended, explicitly showing that while the pawns can be killed or captured, the masterminds are still lurking in the shadows ready to inflict more evil on

America. The CIA, thus, will always play a crucial role in protecting America from terrorism. "Homeland" ends with a shot of the mastermind of the suicide bombings, an American who converted to Islam, still at large, talking to a man on the street under Quinn's voiceover saying, "These people hate us." The audience is left assuming the shadowy figure is conspiring with another terrorist or recruiting another malcontent. In "Soft Kill," the helpless looking black woman raking her yard alone at the end of the episode turns out to be a gun toting FBI agent who arrests her knife-wielding attacker. But the audience knows there were seventy-four names and addresses on the list of families and these are all people who will need to be protected. This reinforcement of justification for a strong intelligence presence in the US correlates to Giddens and Fiske's concerns about totalitarianism. Fiske writes "Terror and the maximizing of police power are experienced totally by certain segments of our population, and from others, loud voices are calling for their intensification." (Fiske, 1994, 241) The show clearly demonstrates the need for maintaining a strong CIA in the war on terrorism.

The fact that sympathetic portrayals of the CIA have recently become entertainment not only on television but also in film may puzzle those critical of its past activities. Without going into a long list of the CIA's public relations and credibility problems, it's not an exaggeration to say the CIA has come under much scrutiny lately. Agents have been involved in internal espionage. Critics charge the CIA failed to predict or prevent the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the CIA director recently accepted the blame for providing incorrect information to President Bush about Saddam Hussein in the President's 2003 State of the Union Address. The fact that three shows about the CIA, *The Agency*, *24*, and *Alias* began on television two years ago all with

several episodes in the can before 9/11 says something about the mood of the country, even before the US was attacked. Until recently, there have never been television shows purporting to be directly about the CIA. Even in 1980 under the Reagan administration, CBS, believing the country had moved sufficiently far to the right, commissioned a pilot script for a show called *The CIA*. But the pilot never even got to the production stage. (Gitlin, 1994, 221-223) Whatever the CIA's past failings, the ongoing war on terrorism with its fear of more attacks makes the best argument for the need to strengthen the organization at this time. As FAIR founder Jeff Cohen notes with dismay, "...positive media presentations can help sell the public on the need for the CIA and its estimated $30 billion price tag." (Cohen, 2001)

The CIA is glamorized and romanticized further by several other strategies in this show. *The Agency* glorifies the government's arsenal of technological innovations, particularly devices aimed at surveillance, including the latest in hidden video cameras, computers and bugging devices. By watching the CIA use the available technical toys, the audience may become desensitized to increasingly being themselves monitored in their own daily activities, as long as those tools are justified in keeping the United States safe from terrorist attack. Fiske warned in1994 that "...surveillance is rapidly becoming the most efficient form of power, the most totalitarian and the hardest to resist." (Fiske, 1994, 218) He writes, "Surveillance shifts the relations between the state and its citizens toward the totalitarian while allowing the visible structures of democracy to remain apparently untouched." (Fiske, 94, 240) At the same time, the show presents the operatives (with the exception of the sinister foil Quinn) as likeable, caring, fair-minded civil servants, and they're sympathetic to the audience. An attempt is also made to keep

the show hip, by nodding to the moral ambiguity the public has come to expect after recent revelations about the CIA. For example, in "Soft Kills," the CIA bugs a Spanish government office building and an outraged President tells the CIA director to cease all operations in Spain. The director follows his words literally and ceases all operations, leaving the bugs where the CIA placed them so they can continue listening. In "Homeland," the operatives digitally manufacture footage of a suicide bombing at a military facility and release the phony video to television stations to trick the terrorists in Dubai into releasing the bank deposit so the CIA can trace it. One operative says it's not the first time the CIA manipulated news footage for the press. Again, this desensitizes the viewers to shock that a government agency would feed America disinformation.

THE CIA AS TELEVISION CONSULTANT

Given the discourse on terrorism and the CIA in the show *The Agency* described above, it's appropriate to consider Fiske's question about just whose view of the world television is presenting. What seems most unsettling about the framing of terrorism on this particular television show is the involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency in a consulting role. Of course, consultants on television are nothing new. Even *The West Wing* hired three consultants "to provide a conservative perspective to the show's writers," then let them go because there wasn't enough for them to do. (Luntz, 2002, A.19) But it's a new phenomenon for the CIA to cooperate with a television show. For the first time ever with the pilot episode of *The Agency*, the CIA allowed a production unit to film inside CIA headquarters. In that show, characters cross the lobby clearly stepping over the agency's logo on the floor. This episode even featured off-duty CIA employees as extras walking into the building. They came in on a Saturday saving the

show the expense of screening extras for security and then hiring more security personnel or working overtime to keep an eye on the extras. (Sciolino, 2001, 1.1) The CIA had even scheduled, and then cancelled after 9/11, a red-carpeted premiere at headquarters to view the pilot and provided the show with posters, agency seals, flags, and CIA trash bags. (Bernstein, 2001, 2.24) Since the pilot, the show has moved to the old *Felicity* location at Universal Studios. (Barron, 2002)

In marked contrast to the military, the FBI and the Pentagon, the CIA has historically refused to cooperate with Hollywood or television depictions of the agency. The military was involved with Hollywood almost since the beginning of film. For *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915, D.W. Griffith convinced West Point engineers to provide technical advice for his Civil War reenactments, even lending him artillery. (Seelye, 2002, A.1) The FBI consulted on the Quinn Martin television series starring Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. that ran from 1965-1974. Determining just how much influence the FBI actually had on that show is difficult. The organization, at least, supervised scripts for depiction of proper bureau procedures (*The FBI*, nd). The Pentagon regularly consults on Hollywood films, and the popularity of *Top Gun*, starring Tom Cruise, for example, increased Navy recruiting dramatically in the eighties. (Goldstein, 2001, F.1) Evidence has emerged recently that the CIA may have exercised some control over Hollywood film content at certain studios, but the agency certainly would not have advertised its influence. (Eldridge, 2000, 149) John Patterson writes in *The Guardian* that before the Iran Contra scandal and the success of Costra-Gavras' film *Missing* "...if a movie explicitly condemned CIA actions—such as *Under Fire*—the studios could be counted on to bury it." (Patterson, 2001, 1.15) Apparently in the past the CIA also closely monitored media

depictions of itself. According to retired CIA officer, Tony Mendez, the agency assigned an officer to watch the television show, *Mission: Impossible*, to answer questions from the public about whether the agency could actually do what was depicted on the show. (Salamon, 12/4/01, E1)

The CIA opened a public relations office for the first time in 1978 (Kornblut, 1999, A, 1:4.) But even as late as 1995, according to former CIA sources, when tv producers approached the agency about launching a show similar to the FBI series, "despite initial enthusiasm, the agency declined, fearful of revealing trade secrets" (Slavin, 1997, A, 8:3) The next year, for the first time, the CIA's public affairs office appointed an official Hollywood liaison, Chase Brandon, a field operative who had served in South and Central America for 25 years.

An educated guess would be that concern about the CIA's badly eroding public image led to this move. Brandon says, "Year after year, as moviegoers and TV watchers, we've seen our image and our reputation constantly sullied with egregious, ugly misrepresentation of who we are and what we stand for. We've been imbued with these extraordinary Machiavellian conspiratorial capabilities." (Bernstein, 2001, 2.24) Still, PR Director, Bill Harlow, says, "We want to make it very clear that we're not going Hollywood. Our mission is still a very secretive mission. The vast majority of people here will never meet an actor." (Loeb, 1999, C01) Brandon says, "It is my job to inform and educate the public about a secret organization and yet not divulge any secrets." (CIA Goes Hollywood, 2001,14)

Since the appointment of George Tenet as director, there has been a greater effort to improve the public perception of the CIA. Today, there's a gift store at Langley, public

affairs officers lecture to school groups, and the agency is once again actively recruiting on college campuses. There's a CIA web site for kids and groups can visit headquarters. (Kornblut, 1999, A, 1:4) Job applicants have increased since 9/11. Between September 11 and the end of that month, the CIA received 18,000 resumes. Within two years, the CIA expects that 30% of its employees will have been with them five years or less. (McGray, 2002, 10.10)

The CIA now receives about twelve scripts for movies and television a month but does not cooperate with all project requests. Brandon lists his criteria: "If they appear to be interested in accuracy, if they do not misportray the role of the agency, and we can do so without interfering with our mission, we will consider providing assistance." (Sciolino, 2001, 1.1) For example, the CIA did not like the depiction of senior management in *Spy Game* with Brad Pitt and refused to cooperate. The organization also refused to consult on *The Bourne Identity* starring Matt Damon. (Goldstein, 2001, F.1) Brandon explains, "If someone wants to slander us, it's not in our interest to cooperate." (Farhi, 2001, C.1) Brandon did consult on *The Recruit*, even though the film was based on a real-life traitor within the organization. Brandon makes an appearance in the short documentary on the DVD to explain to the audience that the real CIA, unlike the movie CIA, never kidnaps and tortures its own recruits as part of training as the film depicts. As a comment on the role of Brandon during shooting of *The Recruit*, press reports about the film indicate that star Colin Farrel thought the consultant was almost never on the set and that Al Pacino "wasn't even aware there was a CIA consultant on the set." (Sibbald, 2003, 14) For television, Brandon has so far served as a consultant to both *The Agency* and *Alias*.

In the case of *The Agency*, after an initial meeting with Brandon, the show's creator, Michael Frost Beckner, sent the CIA a rough draft of a script for the show. Brandon says, "I made some comments and he made some changes." (Campbell, 2001, 1.15) He has clarified the level of his involvement in the script process for the press.

> When they show character traits I find less than desirable, I can express my concern about it, but ultimately, it's their call. After all, the CIA helped make the country free and wonderfully open, so people can express themselves artistically. (Bernstein, 2001, 2.24)

Brandon sees scripts for *The Agency*, according to executive producer, Shaun Cassidy, to ensure accuracy rather than for approval. Cassidy adds, however, "Ideally, you would like their support, because they can open doors for you in terms of literal intelligence, back story, clarification, and so forth." (Barron, nd) Beckner says that the point of interest for the CIA in the show is the emphasis on the employees.

> What attracted them to cooperating with us is the fact that we want to tell stories about the lives of the people that work there. A roomful of agency officers is not unlike this room here: regular people doing their job. And that's not portrayed all that much in espionage stories. (Durden, 2001, G4)

Executive producer Gail Katz says there probably could not have been a show about the CIA ten or fifteen years ago. "When we were doing press interviews before the terrorist attacks, a lot of people were asking 'Why do a show about the CIA?' Well, no one's asking that question now." (Goldstein, 2001, F.1) After 9/11, Brandon says,

> Right now the American public needs a sense of reassurance. If anything, a show like *The Agency* couldn't be timelier. Our whole national consciousness is going to change. And I think a responsible film or tv episode about the agency, even one that weaves elements of terrorism into the story line, can show the magnitude of what's at stake. (Goldstein, 2001, F.1)

Cassidy agrees with this view. "For me personally, a show about an organization that was pretty much viewed as a very dark and nefarious place suddenly became much more grey, post 9/11." (Purdham, 2003, 2.1)

The press seemed very interested during the first season in the consultation between the CIA and the producers, and the producers seemed to be playing this angle up for the publicity. In marked contrast, Shaun Cassidy's interviews on this topic seemed more circumspect during the second season, almost downplaying the role of the consultants. During last season, he says there were four retired CIA consultants listed as technical advisers on the credits, including a husband and wife team. Cassidy told a reporter, "They all give us conflicting notes on every script. They usually disagree. They all claim to be no longer working for the CIA, but we doubt that highly." (Owen, 2002, C.6)

Several critics have raised substantial concerns about the involvement of the CIA in a consulting role in film and television. FAIR's Jeff Cohen specifically writes about *The Agency* asking,

> But should network tv producers be showing scripts to a government agency in hopes of getting its support? And if a series is that cozy with its subject, how much integrity can the program have? As long as CBS and the CIA remain wedded, don't expect a hard-hitting episode on the agency's alliance with the corrupt, often-brutal military in Colombia. Or on the CIA's past links to terrorists like Osama bin Laden....(Cohen, 2001)

Steven Aftergood, director of Project on Government Secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists, questions the assumption that the CIA is being more open by cooperating with Hollywood projects. He says "There's a big difference between openness and p.r.; what we've got here is p.r."(Loeb, 1999, C01) Aftergood is suing the CIA under the Freedom of Information Act for an accounting of its expenditures for fiscal year 1999--information that was public in 1997 and 1998. He says,

> We've actually seen a reduction in openness and accountability when it comes to the most important criterion, which is the amount of money that we spend on intelligence.... For people who get their info from government documents, not from tv and the movies, there has actually been a reduction in accountability. (Loeb, 1999, C01)

CONCLUSIONS

Fiske writes that "Television does not 'cause' identifiable effects in individuals; it does, however, work ideologically to promote and prefer certain meanings of the world, to circulate some meanings rather than others and to serve some social interests better than others." (Fiske, 1987, 20) At a time when many dramatic television shows are portraying terrorist attacks as entertainment, this analysis examined the discourse around terrorism in a television show about the CIA. The analysis indicates *The Agency* naturalizes interpretations of terrorism that support US government policy. The well-publicized cooperation of the CIA with the producers makes these messages about terrorist attacks worthy of our attention. As in all American television entertainment, political implications are made almost invisible to the casual viewer. Fiske writes:

> The conventions of realism have developed in order to disguise the constructedness of the "reality" it offers, and therefore of the arbitrariness of the ideology that is mapped onto it. Grounding ideology in reality is a way of making it appear unchallengeable and unchangeable....(36)

Ascertaining the exact nature of the relationship between a secretive government agency like the CIA and television producers glorifying that agency proves to be difficult, but any level of cooperation should raise questions. The threat of terrorism is being used to justify the expenditure of billions of dollars in increased expenses for first-responders, defenses against bioterrorism, increased border security, and espionage. Fiskes' warnings made in 1994 about the leanings of the US toward totalitarianism seem eerily prophetic when considered post 9/11. He warns that:

> If we fail to make the effort to maintain a social diversity and the will to develop ways of living peacefully and respectfully with those who are different from us, there is a real and imminent danger that we will develop, without necessarily realizing what we are doing, a totalitarian state. (Fiske, 94, 240)

The Agency, as this paper demonstrates, exploits at least three of the mechanisms Fiske believes lead to totalitarianism: fear, surveillance, and the maximizing of police power. The US has already seen the threat of terrorism used by an administration as a justification to maximize surveillance and police power, in some critic's minds at the price of civil liberties. *The Agency* and other television shows exploiting terrorism as a topic play on fears that are natural in a citizenry made nervous by the attacks of 9/11. And, since passage of the USA Patriot Act, the government is still expanding its tools in the war on terrorism. The Department of Justice now has the power to detain immigrants without charge or bond. In addition, according to the director of the ACLU Washington National Office, Laura Murphy, "Following an intense internal debate, and over the objections of the Department of State, the Department of Justice embarked on a selective registration program for males from certain countries that plainly amounts to discriminatory profiling." (Murphy, 2003, 6) Attorney General John Ashcroft has introduced the federal Absconder Apprehension Initiative "to target foreign nationals who have ignored orders to leave the country." (Lange, 2003, B1) There has recently been controversy over the Total Awareness Information program, initiated by the US Department of Defense that would create a counter-terrorism information system linking computer databases to provide national intelligence. The recently leaked draft for the Domestic Security Enhancement Act, also known as Patriot II, shows the government wants to establish a DNA database for both proven and suspected terrorists, access consumer credit reports without subpoena, and grant immunity from liability to law

enforcement officers in unauthorized searches and surveillance. (Ramasastry, 2003) Whether safety should be purchased at the price of abrogated civil liberties should be a topic of open debate in this society. Instead, *The Agency* perpetuates simplistic basic assumptions: terrorist acts are inevitable here, the country is vulnerable to attack, ideology is not an important motivation for terrorist activity, the US needs to strengthen and support the CIA in order to prevent terrorism.

The fact that *The Agency* never took off in the ratings does not necessarily mean a rejection of the messages by the audience regarding terrorism. The arrival of at least three new series in the fall centering on the war on terrorism indicates that America will continue to be barraged with dramatizations on this topic. As long as any threat remains, terrorism will continue to be a timely television plot device. But how that discourse is framed and by whom should be of the utmost significance to the future of the country.

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Television News and Gender-Relevant Visual Frames:

How Election Stories Both Empower and Exclude Women Viewers

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ABSTRACT

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Television News and Gender-Relevant Visual Frames:

How Election Stories Both Empower and Exclude Women Viewers

This study involved the analysis of 30 news stories focused on "the importance or value of the women's vote" or "the gender gap" from the 1996, 1992, 1988, and 1984 elections. This study found dramatic evidence of gender-relevant framing in television news video in three categories: visual imaging, visual clichés, and visual stereotypes. In terms of women's involvement in politics, there was evidence that television news messages have been both empowering and exclusionary.

Television News and Gender-Relevant Visual Frames:
How Election Stories Both Empower and Exclude Women Viewers

On July 12, 1984, ABC World News Tonight reporter Richard Threlkeld opened a news package by saying, "For the first time in history, a would-be President kissed a would-be Vice President," referring to the videotaped exchange between Democratic Presidential contender Walter Mondale and his choice for Vice President, Geraldine Ferraro.[1] While Threlkeld chose to emphasize the physical nature of gender/sex difference in his lead about Ferraro's selection, others focused on the historical significance of the first woman being named as a Vice Presidential running mate on a major party ticket. In a soundbite later in Threlkeld's package, Ann Lewis of the National Democratic Committee said, "Today is the first day in the history of this country that ANY child in America can watch the news tonight and say, 'I could be President.' Any child, black or Hispanic or white, girl or boy, I could be President of the United States. That's something for us to be proud of."

ABC World News Tonight devoted almost two-thirds of the newscast to the Ferraro selection that day or about 17 minutes of actual news time. It seemed to be a day of celebration for feminists and a day of speculation for political analysts. One package featured Judy Goldsmith of the National Organization for Women in a soundbite saying, "What is on the table is the agenda of the women of this country who have, in effect, been politically ignored for the more than 200 years of this nation's history and today that mistake has been corrected." ABC Commentator David Brinkley said he wasn't sure how a woman candidate would be received,

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[1] All quotes from ABC, CBS, or NBC news were obtained from written transcripts available through the Lexis/Nexis Document service or transcribed directly from the videotaped news reports.

adding, "This genie is out of the bottle and will never be put back again." But, in retrospect, the most prophetic statement of that newscast came from Anchor Peter Jennings who quoted Thomas Jefferson as saying in 1807, "The public is not prepared for a woman in any public office and nor am I."

In fact, the electorate made it clear in 1984 that they did not support the Mondale-Ferraro ticket and, through the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election, no other women have gotten as far as Geraldine Ferraro did. In fact, since 1984, there have been recurring themes in the news media about the gender gap in voting preferences and the "power" of the women's vote but women still seem to be outsiders when it comes to Presidential politics. The purpose of this qualitative analysis is to examine television news packages with gender-relevant frames from the 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996 Presidential Election campaigns to see how gender has been managed in election campaign news on network television.[2] Specifically, are there identifiable gender factors in the visuals of news packages that relate to women's involvement in the political process, and what roles do reporters play in the process?

Review of Literature

The relationship between television news coverage and the political process in the United States has been scrutinized and criticized by numerous scholars. Some of the common criticisms of television news include having a liberal ideological bias (Jamieson & Campbell,

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[2] Gender-relevant is defined as labeling, categorizing, or describing people or issues with a specific reference to being male/female. This would include references which are gender specific by definition, such as wife, mother, daughter, matronly, etc. for women or husband, father, son, patronly, etc. for men. Gender-neutral is defined as labeling, categorizing, or describing people or issues with no reference to being male/female.

1997), being excessively negative (Sabato, 1993), being overly sensational (Graber, 1997), working to entertain, not inform voters (Kerbel, 1998), emphasizing strategy or the "horserace" rather than focusing on political issues (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1994), and marginalizing women and ethnic minorities (Douglas, 1995; Flanders, 1997). Iyengar (1991) studied how television news is framed or portrayed as episodic, rather than as thematic.

While these scholars may disagree on the exact nature of the problem, most would agree with Graber's (1997) contention that the political power of television comes from its ability to reach millions of people simultaneously with the same images. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) also argue that the extensive reach of television news makes it powerful. Through a series of experiments on agenda-setting, they conclude that "television news powerfully influences which problems viewers regard as the nation's most serious" and that "by priming certain aspects of national life while ignoring others, television news sets the terms by which political judgments are rendered and political choices made" (p. 4).

As noted by Graber (1987), however, the visual nature of television news messages had been routinely ignored by researchers through the mid-1980s. She challenged the results of television content analysis research in which only the words on television news transcripts were studied and called for audio-visual coding. Graber developed "gestalt coding" as a method to address the meanings conveyed by television messages. Gestalt coding considers the general political context, the anchor's lead in and subsequent anchor and reporter verbal and non-verbal editorializing; the audio-visual message conveyed by words, non-verbal sounds, and pictures, and the interactive effect among different parts of news stories or newscasts.

Other feminist scholars have noted the distinction between the male dominated public sphere and the female dominated private sphere of discourse. According to Fiske (1987):

> News is associated with the activities of the public sphere, the province of elites and men, who thus people the news. Women's absence from the public sphere as well as their lack of status as authority figures or experts gives the news media a ready-made justification for women's absence from news programs--without the media's having to confront their complicity in setting the conditions for women's appearance. (p. 284)

Rakow and Kranich (1991) used this public/private distinction as a basis for their study of women sources in television news. They "argue that an understanding of news must begin with its essential gendered nature as a masculine narrative, in which women function not as speaking subjects but as signs" (p. 9). This means that even though women news sources appear to be "real" women, they "*carry* rather than *create* meaning in the stories in which they appear. Like women newscasters, they always signify as 'woman,' but they are seldom able to speak for or about women" (p. 16).

The way political candidates addressed gender-related problems in U.S. Presidential Elections was the subject of a feminist rhetorical critique by Daughton (1995). Her analysis included 39 speeches delivered at the Republican and Democratic conventions during the past two decades. Under the heading of "gender-related problems," she included such women's issues as reproductive freedom, child care, and parental leave. Daughton stated:

> One prominent rhetorical strategy for dealing with certain issues is to designate them "women's issues"' and let them languish from neglect. Of course, the very idea of "women's issues" is problematic, for it effectively marks fully half the population as a "special interest group"--and therefore, in political parlance, as a selfish minority, a group to regard with suspicion, a group that does not seek the common good. (p. 225)

Her critique identified a set of strategies that presidential candidates seem to have adopted for their convention speeches. They are:

> (1) Remain vague in discussing women's roles. Praise individual women who exemplify traditional and nontraditional achievement, but do not spell out the generalizable implications, if any, of their accomplishments. (2) Reinforce the vision of the president as a strong male figure, the ultimate patriarch in a strong patriarchy. If you insist on also being sensitive, you will have to work even harder to prove your manhood. (3) Discuss "women's issues" only rarely, by implication and indirection. (4) Finally, discuss the concept of equal rights not at all. (p. 234)

Daughton also noted more mixed messages in the 1992 campaign, labelled "The Year of the Woman," with candidate Bill Clinton embracing more women's issues than his predecessors.

Vavrus (2000) analyzed political rhetoric in mainstream news texts and noted a dramatic shift in news discourse between the 1992 and 1996 Presidential campaigns, with the "Year of the Woman" being replaced by the "soccer mom" metaphor to depict an aggregate of women. This image also placed women voters into "a demographic category characterized by women's relationships to their children--and an ideology of consumerism that reduces electoral politics to personal choices around product consumption and 'lifestyle'" (p. 193). Vavrus argues that the change from discussing women as powerful in 1992 to the "soccer mom" as swing voter in 1996:

> ...constructs a less threatening identity: one derived in part from traditional stereotypes about women's "proper" places in combination with more contemporary assumptions about women's integral function in the labor force as workers and in the marketing and advertising worlds as a target demographic. (p. 196)

She also argues that this type of discourse is damaging because it distances women from politics and seems to collapse the separation between commercialism and democratic politics.

In summary, this body of research demonstrates the utility of qualitative analysis as a method to further our understanding of news discourse and how gender-related issues are

represented in the media. These scholars have examined various types of news products and have presented examples to support their arguments about what the preferred meanings of the texts are and their ramifications. In all cases, news is understood to have a powerful impact on the male-dominated political sphere and that women are still portrayed as outsiders.

Based on this prior research, two general research question categories were developed:

1. Is there evidence of gender-relevant framing in television news video?
2. As framed by television journalists, are the messages in news stories empowering to women? Do they in some way encourage or invite their involvement in the political process or do the messages exclude them in some way?

Method

In order to examine change over time, this qualitative analysis involved a case study of network television news stories in which the primary topic was "the importance or value of the women's vote" or "the gender gap" in voting preferences from the 1996, 1992, 1988, and 1984 elections. These 30 stories were identified through the search-terms function of the Vanderbilt University Television News Archive and included 14 packages from ABC's "World News Tonight," 9 packages from CBS's "Evening News," and 7 packages from NBC's "Nightly News." This method of analysis was inductive and interpretive with the goal of increasing understanding through criticism. Each news story was viewed repeatedly with the goal of presenting evidence to help answer the research questions.

1. Is there evidence of gender-relevant framing in television news video?

This question was aimed at identifying gender-relevant framing in news video that may or may not correspond to the gender-relevant verbal frames identified through television news

written transcripts. This ended up being one of the most clear-cut distinctions noted in this study because there was dramatic evidence of gender-relevant framing in television news video. In fact, virtually all news video showing people has gender-relevant framing because gender is overt. The television viewer can see if a person is male or female. And, while the gender of an individual can be camouflaged with make-up and/or dress, this was not evident in any of the packages analyzed for this study. As long as the person could be seen clearly, there was not one instance of a questionable gender identity in either soundbites or non-soundbite video shots.

However, beyond the straight-forward "yes or no" evidence of gender-relevant framing, it is important to examine the types of video used in the representations of gender. For the purposes of this analysis, three categories of visual gender-relevant framing were identified and defined based on standard dictionary definitions (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1996). These categories are visual imaging, visual clichés, and visual stereotypes.

By definition, imaging means to represent symbolically so gender-relevant framing involving visual imaging means the basic use of video to help tell a news story by illustration. By definition, a cliché involves a concept or idea that is no longer fresh or original but has become overly familiar or commonplace. So gender-relevant framing involving visual clichés means the over-use of video in news stories that is not fresh or original and has become overly familiar or commonplace. By definition, a stereotype is something conforming to a general pattern, especially a standardized mental picture that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment. So gender-relevant framing involving visual stereotypes involves the use of standard video that represents an oversimplified opinion,

prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment based on gender.

These categories of gender-relevant visual framing can also be ranked according to quality. Visual imaging would be considered the best practice because the video is selected to best illustrate the story regardless of gender. Using visual clichés would be considered the second best practice because using common or familiar video has become a norm in television news. As Graber (1989) notes, "News producers, who must transmit information rapidly to heterogeneous mass audiences, rely on a simple shared audiovisual vocabulary and use familiar descriptions and analogies" (p. 151). So, the use of visual clichés can actually help the viewing audience. However, if journalists are using visual stereotypes, this would be considered the worst practice because it can perpetuate unfair opinions, attitudes, or judgments based on gender.

All three types of gender-relevant visual framing were noted in this study, including visual imaging. For example, in an NBC Nightly News story on October 15, 1996, reporter Gwen Ifill is featured in a package about how the Democrats are working to "exploit the gender gap" by appealing to Republican women in Arizona. In her reporter track, Ifill says, "Targeting women voters in ads and through 55-hundred faxes sent each month to influential women around the country, they've turned life-long Republicans like Teddy Lynn Guppie into Bill Clinton activists." We also see a red, white, and blue sign that says, "Arizona Republican Women for Clinton-Gore."

Then Guppie's voice is heard, saying, "I feel as though I'm a disenfranchised Republican. That makes me in some ways in a no-man's land." As she continues to talk about her opinions

on the budget deficit and the defense budget, we see her working in a greenhouse-garden setting. We also see her working with bedding plants and loading things into the back of a van. This is visual imaging because the video is used to illustrate Guppie in her regular neighborhood environment. There is also a soundbite with Maureen Shea of the Democratic Outreach Organization saying, "What we did is to try to reach women in the neighborhoods where they work and where they're sitting around having coffee on a Saturday morning if they're really lucky." And, although Bob Dole mentions soccer moms in a soundbite in this package, we are spared the soccer mom visual cliché.

However, that was not the case in numerous packages during the 1996 campaign when the most obvious visual cliché involved soccer moms. On August 29, 1996, CBS Evening News anchor Dan Rather leads into a package, saying, "They are working mothers, in the suburbs, stressed out and stretched thin. The pollsters even have a name for them: 'soccer moms.' Bob McNamara has been to their side of the net." In his reporter voice track, McNamara continues the play on words about soccer, saying, "This year, politicians can't score without the soccer moms." We also see a series of video shots showing mostly women and a few men on the sidelines of a youth soccer game. Most of the time, these women watched male children play soccer. During 1996, these types of images quickly became overly familiar and cliché.

Interestingly, in the CBS package, although Rather and McNamara both refer to these women as "working mothers," we never see any video of them in their workplace environment. In addition to the soccer game video, we also see a mom driving in a mini-van, shopping in a grocery store with her children, and at home with her husband and dog, although the man is not

acknowledged in the story. This also became part of the cliché, the soccer moms were "married" but there was never an emphasis on the husband in the video or in soundbites. Throughout the campaign season, the soccer mom visual cliché only encompassed women in the domestic sphere.

In another story specifically about soccer moms on NBC Nightly News on October 15, 1996, anchor Tom Brokaw leads into the package by saying:

> The political professionals this year have called them soccer moms. They may be the most influential voters in the country right now. They're married, suburban women, most of them white, with kids. They're very busy. They have plenty of concerns and they are contributing mightily to Bob Dole's biggest problem, the gender gap. Who are the soccer moms? Well, according to NBC News pollster Peter Hart, they make up only about eight percent of the electorate, but among them, Bill Clinton has stunning 28-point lead over Bob Dole.

Then reporter Lisa Myers begins her package by saying, "They are the most hotly pursued voters in this election, white, married mothers living in the suburbs. They make up their minds late because their lives are too harried to focus on politics." As she says this, we see the standard soccer mom visual cliché of women on the sidelines watching young people playing soccer. Then the video begins showing a series of shots of a woman first in her kitchen with her family and then outdoors with her soccer uniform-clad daughters.

As we see this, we hear Myers reporters voice track say, "CeeCee Thomas of Mechanicsville, Virginia, is in perpetual motion, being a wife, mother of three soccer-playing teenagers and a school guidance counsellor. She voted for George Bush four years ago, is conservative and would like to vote for Dole but, so far, cannot." Thomas is then featured in a soundbite, saying, "I'm just not sure he's in touch with reality and where we need to go." Myers

goes on to say, "Out of touch is a phrase soccer moms often use to describe Dole. Out of touch with their lives and with the 1990s. Clinton got only 20-percent of their votes in 1992 but now has a majority of them, one reason the gender gap has exploded." Here again, all of the video is from a soccer game. People are walking toward a field holding chairs, they are on the sidelines, etc. and they are almost exclusively women. Very rapidly during the election campaign, the "soccer mom" gender-relevant visual cliché became routine.

It was also noted in stories not specifically about the soccer mom phenomenon. On September 27, 1996, ABC World News Tonight reporter Aaron Brown was featured in a package about Bob Dole's problems with three critical voting groups in Florida: the elderly, Cuban Americans, and moderately conservative suburban women. In the section of the story on women, Brown says, "And among women, too, Dole is being hurt by the positions of his own party." This is followed by a soundbite with political scientist Susan McManus who says, "Younger women are drawn away from the Republican party on the abortion issue. And, for the babyboomer women, they're often drawn away from the Republican party on the education issue."

Then, even though the political expert did not bring up soccer moms, Brown says, "Which along with health care were exactly the issues women talked about again and again at Saturday soccer games in Winter Park. Cathy McGruder, a Perot voter four years ago, will vote Clinton this time. Why not Dole?" Then, in her soundbite, McGruder says, "He's too patented in that Republican thing, you know. He's just too much that line." Throughout this portion of the story, we see McGruder watching soccer. Leading into her bite, there was a six shot

sequence showing all "moms" at the game, not one dad or man is seen in any recognizable shots.

Similarly, ABC World News Tonight reporter Jackie Judd is featured in a package on October 9, 1996, about women's views and issues from Ardmore, Pennsylvania. Initially, she interviews five women and talks about these women not minding Dole's age but having problems with his attitude. Here, we see images of a man and woman with a girl toddler in a stroller. Together, they are walking a dog. We also see a woman and child together on a playground. This type of video represents gender-relevant visual imaging because it simply illustrates the various women in the story.

However, Judd quickly moves into soccer mom visual cliché mode, saying, "Pamela Wilk is a so-called soccer mom, white, suburban women busy with kids and often jobs who could be the decisive voters in this election. Wilk supports Clinton and says the government can help people do better for themselves, to have childcare when they need it, and health insurance." The video shown here is of all women on the sidelines watching boys play soccer. In this part of the story, all visible children are male, all visible parents are moms. The gender-relevant visual cliché about soccer moms never broadens enough to include the women's working world or husbands, even though by verbal description, these soccer moms are married and work outside of the home. And although this gender-relevant visual framing became overly familiar and commonplace, it did not represent a particularly negative depiction of women.

There were some negative depictions of women and men noted when the gender-relevant framing involved visual stereotypes, but these were most common during the earlier elections. For example, on the CBS Evening News on February 4, 1984, anchor Bob Schieffer introduces a

story about the Democratic Presidential hopefuls having a number of debates, saying, "the latest (debate) focusing on women's issues, which the Democrats hope to keep on the 'front burner' until the November election." Reporter Eric Engberg begins the package by showing several male candidates while saying, "With the exception of these six fellows, it was an all woman show, run by women to talk about women's issues. The fact that these six busy men made time for the event was, in itself, noteworthy." This is followed by a soundbite with *Boston Globe* columnist Ellen Goodman saying, "Ten years ago, do you think they would have shown up? No way."

Engberg goes on to report that President Ronald Reagan is more strongly supported by men than women, by a 63% to 52% margin. He says, "The President, who offended many women with his opposition to the ERA, is trying to close the gap by reaching out to Republican women, such as these invited to the White House yesterday," with video shown of women in a banquet hall setting. Next, we see file video of chanting ERA supporters in a demonstration setting, while Engberg says, "Experts say the ERA isn't the only reason for the gender gap. Women earn less money than men." As we hear the part about women earning less money, the video shows an extremely pregnant woman moving things in a warehouse. This gender-relevant visual stereotype seemed to imply that women deserve to earn less money because they are limited by pregnancy and/or child bearing. Even though by 1984, women were employed in numerous professional capacities, the video chosen to depict women wage earners was a stereotypical portrayal of woman as expectant mother in an unskilled job.

Engberg does incorporate a soundbite with Kathy Wilson of the National Women's

Political Caucus, in an effort to explain why women are less likely to support Reagan. She said, "The problem is the ingrained discrimination that Ronald Reagan refuses to address. That is why he seems not to be rising in standing among women as a result of the improvement in the economy." In this story, we also see video of a woman in a secretary role followed by video of a man lifting packages in an industrial setting.

Later that year on August 21, 1984, CBS Evening News anchor Dan Rather is broadcasting from the Republican National Convention in Dallas and says, "It's the second day of all for the glory, all for one and all for Reagan but, today, some of the stress cracks of the future began to show up, too." Rather mentions "the lack of an ERA plank is rankling some Republican women." He then introduces the package, "Bernard Goldberg looks beyond one party's fault line to a two-party gender gap."

As this package begins, we see a group of women running holding a Reagan sign, then the shot widens to show the rest of the sign that says, "Retire Ronald Reagan." Goldberg's corresponding voice track says, "They say they are the gender gap, women against Reagan, literally and symbolically running against the President through the streets of Dallas." Then a soundbite with an unidentified woman, saying as she runs, "I voted for him once, in 1980, I believed in him once," then she shakes her head in a negative motion. Then we hear a man say, "But you're running against him now?" and a woman off camera is heard saying, "Damn right." Here the video is of one woman looking extremely tired or sick and about to fall over as she runs. This is a visual stereotype depicting woman as physically weak or defeated in some way. Beyond the visual stereotype, the combined audio and video message seems to be, run all you

want, you can't win.

Goldberg continues by saying, "GOP strategists say they can run all they want, they are write-offs, just like a lot of feminists." Next, there is a soundbite with Reagan campaign strategist Lyn Nofziger saying, "Most of the women you'll hear complaining are liberals and left-wingers, people who wouldn't vote for Ronald Reagan under any circumstances." As the story continues, the reporter flips the gender gap analogy from being a women versus Reagan division to a men against the Mondale/Ferraro ticket. The closing statement comes from Goldberg on camera, saying, "This is supposed to be the Year of the Woman in politics, after all more women vote than men, six million or so more and the conventional wisdom is that the gender gap could make a big difference in who wins and who loses, so around here, the Republicans are saying if they have a gap to close, the Democrats have a canyon." Over this last part of his reporter stand-up, they overlay a zoom-in shot of a t-shirt which reads, "Mondale eats quiche." This referred to a popular slogan in the 1980s that "real men don't eat quiche." Consequently, this represents a gender-relevant visual stereotype which implies that Mondale is not a "real man" and introduces a subtle bias into the news story.

Four years later, on August 17, 1988, an ABC World News Tonight package featuring Lynn Sherr, a woman reporter, examines the possibility that Vice Presidential Candidate Dan Quayle might have been put on the ticket to appeal to women voters. Sherr's package compares Quayle to movie star Robert Redford's film role in *The Candidate*. The package starts off by showing a split screen visual that shows a strong physical resemblance between the two men. She says, "This candidate is Robert Redford. This candidate is not. But try telling that to some

Republican delegates who hope that their new nominee-to-be will be a one-man bridge over the gender gap. Will Dan Quayle appeal to women voters?"

This is followed by a soundbite with Republican pollster Linda Divall who said, "Absolutely, does Robert Redford appeal to women? Of course he does. He's a good looking, energetic, dynamic man. He's extremely intelligent and women like intelligent, good looking men." However, Republican Representative Claudine Schneider of Rhode Island seemed offended by the idea that Quayle would only bridge the gender gap because he looks like Hollywood's version of a candidate. In a soundbite, Schneider said, "That is probably one of the most disgusting things I've heard yet because that is truly underrating the way women vote. It's assuming women are airheads." Throughout this story, video of Quayle is distinctly positive with close-ups, upward angle shots, and with him smiling confidently. The visual stereotype is of the pretty boy who has attained prestige because of his looks and charisma, not because of substance.

In 1996, a few more gender-relevant visual stereotypes were noted. On August 22, 1996, an ABC World News Tonight package featuring Rebecca Chase was all about President Clinton's consideration of a welfare reform initiative and a program in Georgia which has required recipients to work for the past two years. Although there is no gender-relevant verbal frame, all of the video reflects gender-relevant visual stereotypes. All seven of the people shown in video shots are women, one white woman and six African Americans. Even the people working in the welfare office were women with the only man shown being a job skills teacher. By watching this package, it is clear that welfare is a woman's domain, especially if you're an

African American woman.

A few days later, on ABC World News Tonight on August 26, 1996, gender-relevant visual stereotypes were noted in another package by Rebecca Chase. She was reporting on the effectiveness of the Brady Bill, overall, and specifically about guns and domestic violence. In Chase's package, an expert noted that 85 felons a day are denied guns because of the Brady Bill's required computer checks prior to purchase. She goes on to say, "However, 1500 women in the U.S. are killed in domestic disputes each year and about half of those involve firearms. The problem is that 90-percent of domestic violence cases are not prosecuted and, most of those that are, end up as misdemeanors." Also, a soundbite featuring a woman points out that "having a gun in a violent domestic violence setting makes it a lethal situation."

While hearing these statistics, we see still photographs of several women who are bruised and battered, plus ambulance shots of women on stretchers and one unidentifiable man in handcuffs walking down a hall with law enforcement officers. We also see that all people buying and looking at guns in shops are men. This represents gender-relevant visual stereotypes because woman is victim, man is victimizer. It is also notable that this story on gun control is framed verbally as a women's issue because of the emphasis on domestic violence.

As these examples show, there is evidence of gender-relevant framing in television news video and it can take the form of visual imaging, visual clichés, or visual stereotypes. And, while visual stereotypes were noted in a few stories, they were not the norm. For the most part, the television news video analyzed for this study did not represent an overly negative view of men or women but the over-reliance on the soccer mom visual cliché in the 1996 election made

women seem unidimensional. They were defined verbally and visually according to their maternal role and only if their children played soccer but at least they were portrayed as a powerful voting group. Similar news messages of women voters and empowerment were noted in the 1980s but with dramatically different results, as noted in the next section.

2. As framed by television journalists, are the messages in news stories empowering to women? Do they in some way encourage or invite their involvement in the political process or do the messages exclude them in some way?

Women have been receiving mixed messages about the power of their vote since the gender gap first became salient in television coverage of the 1984 Presidential Election. From the CBS Evening News on February, 14, 1984, an Eric Enberg package had a soundbite with Debate Forum Director Margaret McKenna saying, "Women will choose the next President. They'll make the difference." This story also notes that women are much less likely to support Ronald Reagan than men and Engberg said, "It offers Democrats an opportunity at a time when the President is otherwise riding high."

Then a soundbite followed with Ann Lewis of the Democratic National Committee saying, "The gender gap is another continental divide, the women are on one side and the cowboys on the other." Throughout this package, the theme that develops is women versus Ronald Reagan. In his reporter stand-up close, Engberg says, "Only in the decade of the 80s have the voting patterns of women been different than those of men. No one is certain why that is but many analysts think that as women have moved into the work force, they have come to see themselves as a distinct group. A group with grievances, and now, real power."

The same theme was noted in a package on ABC World News Tonight on May 16, 1984, which anchor Peter Jennings introduced by saying, "The women's vote in 1984 can mean the difference between winning and losing; 53-percent of the population is female." Reporter Richard Threlkeld started by saying, "Ronald Reagan has the biggest problem with the gender gap. He can sound pretty old fashioned." This was followed by a soundbite with Reagan, "I happen to be one who believes that if it wasn't for women, us men would still be walkin' around in skin suits and carrying clubs." Then Threlkeld states, "Women have mastered the once manly art of politics and found they can make a difference, and women are voting their feelings." Ann Lewis of the Democratic National Committee is again featured in a soundbite, saying, "What's happened in the last two years is that women have concluded, our private values are good enough to be our public values and we will measure candidates, we will measure parties, we will measure public decisions by the same private values we have always used in our own lives."

These stories aired prior to Walter Mondale's selection of Geraldine Ferraro as the first woman Vice Presidential nominee on a major party ticket in July of 1984, however her nomination resulted in even more mixed messages for women. In the ABC World News Tonight Ferraro coverage on July 12, 1984, there was evidence of both positive and negative gender distinctions. A positive gender distinction would include a reference to one's gender as being beneficial in some way. A negative gender distinction would include a reference to one's gender as being a hinderance or drawback. Reporter Brit Hume talked about Ferraro's face being filled with emotion and described her saying, "She cast herself not as a glamorous symbol of feminism but as a tough lady politician from Queens who stands up for the little guy."

In the same newscast, reporter Lynn Sherr said Ferraro "got a big job break thanks to a cousin who was a District Attorney. It was as a prosecutor in the Borough of Queens." The unspoken assumption here is that she didn't really deserve the job. Sherr went on to say, "The experience sharpened her investigative skills and made her a feminist and liberal." This was followed by a soundbite of Ferraro saying, "Women have always had to prove that we were better in order to be accepted as being as good, I mean that honestly." In these two packages, which were back-to-back in the newscast, we see that being a woman is a positive thing but being a feminist is either bad or good depending on who is speaking. The messages shift back and forth. Within her package, Sherr details Ferraro's experience in Congress and as an attorney but closed her story by referring to Ferraro as the "housewife from Queens on the ticket."

By the time of the November election in 1984, the Mondale/Ferraro ticket withered under overwhelming vote totals for Reagan and Bush. All of the empowerment messages saying women could mean the difference for the Democrats simply faded away. In the Reagan versus women contest, women lost again. However, one set of poll results from July 12, 1984, which aired on ABC World News Tonight showed that the logic behind those messages was faulty. Reporter Bernard Goldberg cited a poll saying men favor Reagan-Bush over Mondale-Ferraro by a 60 to 35 percent margin and that women also favor Reagan but by a margin of 47 to 42 percent. With numbers like these, the Mondale-Ferraro ticket never really had a chance because both women and men favored Reagan, just by differing margins.

By 1988, the empowerment messages for women were back because Ronald Reagan's Vice President, George Bush, had inherited the gender gap problem. On June 30, 1988, NBC

Nightly News reporter Lisa Myers reported that Bush was trailing with women voters and said that "closing the gender gap had become almost an obsession within the Bush campaign." In her reporter stand-up, Myers said, "It's not tough to figure out why. Ten-million more women than men are expected to vote in November. If Bush loses badly among women, he can't win the election."

Then on July 24, 1988, ABC World News Tonight reporter Carole Simpson is featured in a package about Bush and women's issues. She says, "George Bush has referred to it as the woman thing, a problem some Republican strategists say must be solved if Bush is to become the next President." Later in her stand-up, Simpson says, "With predictions that the election will be close, and with ten-million more women voting than men, it's believed that women this year could very much determine who will occupy the White House."

By August 13, 1988, CBS Evening News reporter Susan Spencer also covered the problem Republicans and George Bush in particular had attracting women voters. She says, "Bush may have inherited the problem because of Reagan era prosperity. More women are in the work force but they're at the bottom and they don't necessarily agree with the prosperity for all claims. They may worry more about future economic security." This is followed by a soundbite with Columbia University's Ethel Klein about George Bush. "It's a totally male biography, totally aimed at male values. He's got a war record. You know that he's with the C.I.A. and he doesn't speak very much to what women's values are." Then Spencer says, "With ten-million more women than men expected to vote in the fall, that may change."

Of course, George Bush handily defeated Michael Dukakis and, once again, the

empowerment messages for women voters simply faded away. At least in 1988, there was one reference that qualified the common frame. In a package on August 17, 1988, ABC World News Tonight reporter Lynn Sherr was featured in a package about Bush and Quayle appealing to women. In her stand-up, she said, "Well, whatever the assumptions, closing the gender gap will not guarantee victory in November. The women's vote has never won a Presidential Election. Still, if this one is close, it could make a difference." However, it didn't and women were left to wonder about the contradictory messages about the power of the women's vote.

By 1992, when Bill Clinton ran successfully against incumbent George Bush, reporters retreated and did not mention the gender gap or the importance of the women's vote in any television news packages. The Vanderbilt Archive search uncovered only one story on ABC World News Tonight on March 3, 1992, about Pat Buchanan having a problem with women voters and a gender gap. Reporter Lynn Sherr read text while graphics were shown on-screen about his trailing in the polls. Of course, when the election results were tallied, women had finally altered the course of the 1992 election by favoring Clinton over Bush, and the gender gap was alive and well as a news peg for the 1996 election.

In fact, a few reporters began referring to the gender gap as a chasm, including Lisa Myers on the NBC Nightly News on March 5, 1996. She begins her package by saying, "The Republicans have a problem with women, even among the party faithful." Later in her stand-up, she says, "If there is widespread agreement on anything this wacky political season, it's that women probably hold the key to the November election and that to win, any Republican must carry not only Republican women but a big chunk of independents." She reminds viewers that in

1992, George Bush did not and only got 37 percent of women's votes.

On July 13, 1996, NBC Nightly News reporter Gwen Ifill is featured in a package about Bob Dole's efforts to close the gender gap. She said, "Few issues have proved as risky for Bob Dole this year as abortion rights. A big part of the reason, an anti-abortion stance that puts him at odds with a majority of women voters. The gender gap is a dangerous political chasm for Dole who most recent polls show is only favored by 33 percent of women voters, while Bill Clinton has the support of 56 percent." Very rapidly in the 1996 campaign, the Dole versus women theme came to dominate some stories. In Ifill's package, Republican Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine emphasized this issue in a soundbite, saying, "We must stop treating the gender gap as was quoted by a columnist in *Time* magazine recently, like some mysterious female disorder." In her stand-up close, Ifill said, "Democrats are working hard to retain their advantage, tracking their progress with women voters from an office within the White House. Republicans dismiss these efforts as gimmicks but, to win, they're going to have to find a way to at least shrink the gap."

As the election campaign progressed, this divide was covered in a number of ways. On August 13, 1996, on ABC's World News Tonight, anchor Peter Jennings emphasized the gender gap while talking about the Republican National Convention. Jennings said, "Polls commissioned by the Republican Party show the party has lost nearly 10 percent of women since they voted the Republican majority into the 104th Congress in 1994." Jennings also brought up the Republicans' platform fight over the abortion issue, saying "The right to an abortion has never been an overwhelming issue for women at election time but this fight within the

Republican Party has many Republican women questioning how far the party is willing to go to limit their rights." This statement is followed by a soundbite of an unidentified woman who says, "The Republican Party has ignored this whole fringe of smart women out there who don't want the government sticking their nose in this abortion thing and I think they've underestimated the power of that." In this instance, the division was between women and the Republican Party, instead of candidate Bob Dole.

Up until the end of August, 1996, the gender gap stories were focused primarily on the power of the women's vote and considerations about why women do or do not favor Bill Clinton or Bob Dole. However, by the end of August and through September and October, gender gap stories became increasingly focused on the soccer mom phenomenon. As noted earlier in this chapter, the soccer mom theme provided for a series of powerful gender-relevant visual clichés but it also involved some mixed messages for women. For example, on August 29, 1996, CBS Evening News reporter Bob McNamara was featured in a package about soccer moms and said, "Right now, polls show most of these women leaning towards Clinton but all that could change because, so far, most of these busy, working mothers haven't had time to pay much attention to politics."

This idea was echoed in an NBC Nightly News package on October 15, 1996, when reporter Lisa Myers said of soccer moms, "They make up their minds late because their lives are too harried to focus on politics." These types of references make women seem scattered and confused simply because they are undecided. In contrast, there were no similar references to undecided male voters being too busy to focus on politics. It also seems to be a contradiction

because later in Myers story, she cites poll results that show "Dole is losing among virtually all groups of women, young, old, urban, suburban. He leads Clinton only among white women who go to church more than once a week." These results show that many women had made up their minds and were not too harried or confused to get involved in politics but this message was buried. The fact that soccer moms only represented about eight percent of the voting public indicated that they received a great deal more attention than other comparable demographic groups and this, in turn, minimized the news access of other groups.

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, women have been subjected to mixed messages in television news packages dating back to at least 1984 when the gender gap became prevalent in coverage. On the one hand, women were told they could decide the outcome of an election and that they had political power. However, when the messages were framed as women versus Ronald Reagan in 1984 or women versus George Bush in 1988, the outcome of the elections seemed to indicate that women were losers without political power. By 1992, the television news messages about the gender gap and the importance of the women's vote were gone but, when the outcome of the election showed that women voters were winners, their political power was back again for the 1996 Presidential Election.

It appears that the news messages which emphasized the power of the women's vote during the 1984 and 1988 elections ended up backfiring and were exclusionary for women who did not support Reagan or Bush because they were told they could make a difference with their vote and they did not. In each of these elections, the news message was that many million more

women vote than men so this would seem to encourage them to get involved in the political process. In the 1984 election, the news coverage of Walter Mondale selecting the first-ever woman Vice Presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferarro, added to the empowerment message. What was missing in the news messages that made them contradict the election results was that many women favored Reagan in 1984 and Bush in 1988. By exaggerating the political power of women during the 1980s, these messages became contradictory and exclusionary.

During the 1996 election campaign, there were overt news messages about the power of the women's vote but when these messages emphasized that women voters were a Republican problem rather than a Democratic asset, they became more exclusionary. Entman (1993) contends that these competing frames should be expected in political news because politicians and journalists have differing goals. "...the frame in the news text is really the imprint of power -- it registers the identity of actors or interests that compete to dominate the text" (p. 55). And the soccer mom visual cliché was limiting for the large number of women voters who did not fit into that demographic group. For all of these reasons, it seems clear that, as framed by television journalists, the messages in news stories are both empowering to women and exclusionary.

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"EAT. SLEEP. WATCH *DAWSON'S CREEK*:" CONSUMING *DAWSON'S CREEK'S* TEENAGE EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Drawing on cultural studies, especially consumption, this study examines how a sample of the audience of *Dawson's Creek*, a Warner Brothers' Television show, interpret and relate to the show and whether they incorporate these meanings into their lives. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted with females aged 15- to 20-years-old. Findings suggest the way participants the show establishes a way of life for them, serving a crucial role of support during the teenage years.

Introduction

Dawson's Creek is the first in a line of successful Warner Brothers (WB) Television Network shows directed towards teenage audiences. In spite of its success and the vulnerability of its target audience, few studies have examined the show. This paper examines how female teenage viewers of *Dawson's Creek* interpret and relate to the show, and whether they incorporate these meanings into their everyday lives.

The Show

Dawson's Creek premiered on the WB in January 1998. The show is set in Cape Side, Massachusetts, a small, fictional coastal town, where a considerable amount of activity centers on the relationship between the two main characters, Dawson Leery and Josephine "Joey" Potter. Dawson and Joey are childhood friends and neighbors who grew up together, but have had a difficult relationship – both come from unstable households and both have been confined in a relationship that teeters between friendship

and romance. However, despite their problems, both Dawson and Joey are highly motivated, career and goal oriented characters.

Another main character is Jennifer "Jen" Lindley, who, although strong, she continuously struggles for respect and self-dignity. Her search for identity is evidenced by her difficult relationship with males. Her paradoxical behavior includes her distrust for men, fear of intimacy, and sexual promiscuity. Jen was disowned by her parents and sent to live with her grandmother in Cape Side after her parents discovered she was sexually active.

The fourth main character is Dawson's best friend, Pacey Witter, a character who also struggles to find his place in the world. During the 2001-2002 season, after graduating from Cape Side High School, all of the characters entered college except for Pacey who did not have the grades to be accepted, dealing another blow to his self-esteem. Similarly, during the 1999-2000 season, Pacey's and Dawson's friendship deteriorated when Pacey began dating Joey. Both of these events left an enduring effect on Pacey and his perceptions of himself.

Jack McPhee is one of the show's most discussed characters because he has been credited with being one of the first teenage characters to "come out" on national television. Jack's sexuality has been the major focus of his character's struggle for acceptance. As such, he has faced significant discrimination ranging from his experience as a high school football player, to being selected to be the "token" gay male member of a college fraternity. Jack has a younger sister, Andy, who moved to Cape Side during Season 2. She has experienced some psychological problems and now appears only occasionally.

Teen Shows/Teen Marketing

While the teen marketing phenomenon did not begin with *Dawson's Creek*, the show greatly profited from this trend. The groundwork for this resulting success was paved by shows such as the popular 1990's teenage drama, *Beverly Hills, 90210*, considered by many as the first show in the "Planet Teen" genre of television programming. This group of shows focuses on relationships between the teenage characters. Parent-children relationships are either unimportant or nonexistent. Like *Dawson's Creek*, *Beverly Hills, 90210* was concerned with the "crucial business of soul-searching and self-dramatization" (Carson, 1999, ¶ 5). WB shows like *Dawson's Creek* appeal to viewers with messages that say: "watch us because we understand you." This message resonates with viewers because this young, teenage group is one that often feels misunderstood. *Dawson's Creek's* focus on the teenage experience is designed to lure teenage viewers by seemingly helping them to find themselves and form their own identities.

As a result of this success, advertisers realize they can no longer ignore this group, who made up twenty-five to thirty-three percent of U.S. retail spending, or $172 billion in 2001, up from $100 billion in 1995 (Kato, 2002). Advertisers sell a variety of products to this audience, but the most interesting and lucrative is the marketing of popular music on shows like *Dawson's Creek*. At the conclusion of each episode the songs used in the show are acknowledged by stating the artist's name and album where the selection can be found. This acknowledgement has paid off for many artists, especially Paula Cole and her song, "I Don't Want to Wait," which was a minor hit before being featured in *Dawson's Creek* promos. The single's popularity soared as a

result of its promotion. Now, as Lew Goldstein, co-president of marketing at the WB network states, "Everyone wants the *Dawson's Creek* treatment," so that they too may experience the same sort of success (quoted in Stanley, 1999, ¶ 28).

Perhaps most lucrative for the WB is its network philosophy to provide teens with a voice, and as Thompson argues, "Teens today haven't had a language they could relate to. These shows are giving a vocabulary to the teenage wasteland" (Thompson, quoted in Goodale, 1999, ¶ 8). This voice is important because:

> it is a different world. Teenagers not only have an abundance of series about them … they practically have their own network [the WB] … shows like *Dawson's Creek* … depict a universe in which the high school years are all that matter. (Gates, 1999, ¶ 3)

Teens feel misunderstood and ignored and *Dawson's Creek* gives voice to the teenage viewer, while providing an answer to the question – what is life really like as a teenager?

With ongoing debates concerning the effects of television viewing on impressionable audiences raging, there is a need to analyze teen-targeted television shows and their audiences. This study makes a contribution by examining teenage female perceptions of one of the most popular teenage dramas, *Dawson's Creek*, giving voice to its female teenage viewers and allowing them to explain the set of meanings and cultural experiences they associate with the show.

Literature Review

Most of the studies regarding television and its audiences look at media effects by defining and controlling variables in an experimental setting. This study is not located in that paradigm, instead, it looks at the meaning-making processes of teenagers through

their experiences watching television. Therefore, the literature reviewed in this section reflects that interest.

Studying *Dawson's Creek*

Despite the success of *Dawson's Creek*, scholarship analyzing the show is scant. Nixon (2001) examined how the show is packaged for its teenage audience, analyzing storylines and commercials aired. In her analysis, she was not surprised to find that the show presents "adult" themes to its young audience and she agrees with critics that the show is not suitable for its young audience. She highlights the show's power to shape and mold the minds of its young and impressionable viewers.

In her dissertation, Haggins (2000) examined, "the interplay between the mythos of The American Dream, the medium of television, and the formation of racial and national identities" (¶ 1). Through the use of in-depth interviews with underprivileged teenagers in California, she found that the show shapes viewers' ideas of the American Dream, often creating a false impression of the teenage world, presenting a lifestyle that many viewers may never attain. Hence, the teenage television "reality" may conflict with viewers' "reality."

Television and Identity

Television has the power to shape and mold impressionable young minds, both positively and negatively. In fact, there is often more interaction between young viewers and the television screen, than between these viewers and their parents (or other authority figures). Fisherkeller (1999) examined the interpretations of a group of twelve and thirteen-year-old adolescents of how the media educates them about their own identities and their world. Her study found that "relations of social power in the actual lives of …

young people create contexts that frame what individuals want and need to acquire from television" (p. 204). Since teenagers are on quests to find their identities, television often fulfills this need.

In addition, Fisherkeller found that television does not necessarily reinforce lessons viewers have already learned. To illustrate this finding, she draws on Hall (1973) and argues that it is not clear whether impressionable viewers "are merely accepting, resisting, or opposing the dominant ideologies of programming" (p. 201). Regardless, television serves as a reference for teenagers striving to find their places in the power and class structures of society.

Fisherkeller also addressed the role of television in the identity formation of young, impressionable viewers, who create contexts that frame what they need and desire to acquire from television: "Young people reflect on the meaning and value of symbols in the media fictions and how these symbols contribute to their sense of themselves and their ideas about culture and society" (Fisherkeller, 1999, p. 203)

Similarly, Brown and Dykers (1994) examined "teenage room culture," as part of their study of "how individuals work and play with the variety of available cultural symbols, myths and artifacts in the process of creating a sense of themselves" (paragraph 3). They argue that the mass media play a crucial role as a "cultural tool kit" from which teenagers draw to develop their identity.

Teenagers' identity is linked to feelings of self-worth. For instance, Harter et al. (1979) found that physical appearance is the most important criteria contributing to young people's feelings of self-worth for females and males alike. More importantly, these scholars found that teenagers learn these criteria from the television programs they

watch. Harter et al. also found that television programming content portrays a world where only attractive characters advance and gain success in their lives, while those who are not up to this socially-defined standard are often not as successful, further fueling the perception that it pays to be physically attractive, over any other quality or characteristic a person may possess.

Teenage identity is also linked to viewers' choices of favorite characters. Cohen argues favorite characters are essential to the study of television viewers because of the development of relationships between characters and viewers. He concludes that a favorite character can be chosen for a variety of reasons, including physical appearance, speech characteristics, behavior, emotional reactions and non-verbal expressions. He points out, however, that the favored qualities of a character are more related to the actor that plays the character, rather than to the actual character on the screen.

In sum, a review of the academic literature pertinent to this study underscores a lack of study concerning *Dawson's Creek*. Moreover, qualitative methodologies such as ethnographies and interviews are rarely used to explore the role of television in teenagers' lives. This study attempts to fill this void as it examines *Dawson's Creek* consumption through the use of in-depth interviews, giving voice to the show's audience.

Method

This study uses qualitative research methods focusing on "how people actively constitute phenomenon in their everyday interaction" (Seale, 1998, p. 68). It is concerned with how teenage female participants perceive the teenage world presented on

Dawson's Creek and whether they incorporate the show's messages into their everyday lives.

In-depth interviews were used to gain insight into these processes. Kvale (1996) defines the interview as a conversation with a goal of producing knowledge; an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. Ten female viewers of *Dawson's Creek*, aged 15- to 20- years-old, were interviewed. Nine participants were Caucasian and one was African American. All participants lived in northeast Georgia at the time of the interview and each attended public high schools. Their socio-economic levels ranged from middle to upper-middle class.

Seven interviews took place at the participants' homes, either in the participant's bedroom or in a common area. Three interviews were conducted over the phone with the aid of a telephone-recording device. The group of participants was gathered through snowball sampling, or sampling by recruitment. A pilot study was conducted in the summer of 2001 with one avid viewer of *Dawson's Creek*. Such a study was necessary for the interviewer to gain a feel for the interviewing process, and it was instrumental in developing and determining themes to be discussed in subsequent interviews. The pilot study participant served as the first "seed" of the snowball sampling.

At the completion of each interview, I left the interview site and immediately wrote down important notes and comments about each participant, including each participant's perceived level of comfort with the interview setting, the interviewing room set-up, and other comments that were pertinent to each interview. Interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word and then transferred to the qualitative software NUD*IST, where thirty-four categories were developed to help organize data. These

categories were further broken down after each group of responses was read and re-read several times. The findings were then reported, as will be discussed in my analysis section. As such, reporting is a crucial, but difficult part of the interviewing process. Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel (2002) note that while it is impossible to quote all findings from a study, it is essential to "quote sufficient evidence to support the researchers' interpretation"; hence, the researcher's interpretations must be supported by quotations from participants (p. 150).

While finding support for my interpretations was essential, the most important factor in my study was ensuring that all participants' voices were heard. Hence, the "reality" of the teenage experiences described by participants is not defined by a single definition and therefore, by no single epistemology; instead, the "reality" of the experience is defined by the participants' voices. The "definitions" of reality stem from the perspectives of the interview participants and not from a controlled, pre-determined condition.

Theoretical Framework

The power of a cultural practice...lies not in what it says or means, but in what it does within its culture (Grossberg, 1984, p. 108).

Consumption has been traditionally viewed as a function of the economic process. Furthermore, the term consumption has often been associated with waste and use, rendering it less important than production. Hugh Mackay (1997) argues that this is a reflection of Protestant cultural tenets that hold work as "noble and productive" and consumption as "less worthy, frivolous, even wasteful, indulgent, or decadent" (p. 2). Mackay also calls attention to the serious gender implications of this dichotomy in which

"the passivity of consumers is congruent with notions of the passivity of women, and the traditionally male world of work is privileged over the female domestic arena" (p. 3). Cultural studies addresses this dualism and the subsequent imbalance between consumption and production by going beyond a narrow economic notion of consumption to conceptualize it as a larger and more autonomous social phenomenon (Friedman, 1994).

Theoretical development in the area of consumption is usually tracked back to Marx's theories which privilege production in all its analyses, and disregard consumption as determined solely by production. Neo-Marxist scholars, however, have become increasingly interested in the study of consumption. For instance, one of the major contributions of the Frankfurt School, the analysis of the culture industry, explained how culture is commodified in order to contribute to social control by hushing people into a silence that perpetuates and preserves the capitalist system (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972). In other words, the culture industry theory suggests that culture has become a narcotic of sorts that anesthetizes consumers so they cannot challenge the system. In this sense, this theory also presents consumption as a passive activity determined by production leaving no space for human agency (du Gay et al., 1997). In consequence, consumers are presented as manipulated victims of capitalism.

Some theorists have drawn on Bourdieu's (1984) proposition that consumption is both a symbolic and an economic activity looking at consumption as a productive activity in which meaning is created. For instance, sub-cultural analysis (Willis, 1978; Hebdige, 1979) looks at how certain groups use commodities to signify an identity that attempts to be oppositional. These studies highlight the active nature of consumption and the

polysemy of commodified goods as signs. This view is taken further by scholars who theorize the "pleasures of consumption" perspective (Chambers, 1986; Fiske, 1989) in which the consumer is presented as unrestrained and creative in his or her meaning-making through consumption. In other words, consumer goods are totally polysemic and the consumer is completely free to use them to produce meaning and hybrid identities through their consumption. The main problem with this view is that meanings encoded in the production process are disregarded, rendering a theoretical picture that highlights the links between consumption and identity but that also disconnects consumption and production.

Michel de Certeau (2002) argues that meanings are made in our everyday use of goods and products. Therefore, the study of this "usage or consumption" should be an area of inquiry as important as the study of representations:

> The analysis of the images broadcast by television (representation) and of the time spent watching television (behavior) should be complemented by a study of what the cultural consumer 'makes' or 'does' during this time and with these images (p. 65).

His project is to foreground what people, "whose status as the dominated element in society … is concealed by the euphemistic term 'consumers'" (p. 64), construct, *fabrique*, with media images. De Certeau believes that too much research assumes that people are shaped by the products they encounter. Instead, he insists, scholars should focus on the "uses" that people make of these products in their everyday life. This preoccupation with everyday life points to a conceptualization of consumption, not as the counterpart of production, but as a form of production in and of itself:

> To a rationalized, clamorous, and spectacular production corresponds another production, called 'consumption'. The latter is devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through ways of using the products imposed by a dominant order (p. 65).

This productive consumption—"trajectories"—although structured through "established languages" and subordinated to "prescribed syntactical forms," follows, nevertheless, its own logic.

For De Certeau, the starting point of consumption is "reading," which has been characterized by some as a passive activity, adding to the conceptualization of the consumer as "a voyeur…in a 'show biz society'" (p. 71). Instead, he argues, reading is a "silent production" since the reader:

> [I]nsinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralizes [sic] himself in it like the internal rumblings of one's body… The readable transforms itself into the memorable …. A different world (the reader's) slips into the author's place. This mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person's property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient (p. 71).

In this way, de Certeau strikes a much-needed balance between consumption and production, presenting the former as an activity that is underpinned by the tension between creativity (of the consumer) and restraint (imposed by production). His emphasis on everyday life stresses the situated character of consumption and underscores the inextricable link between media and culture. It also warns us to avoid looking at everyday life as "invisible" and "unnoticed" (Highmore, 2002).

This framework raises the following questions regarding the topic of this study: How do teenage girls include *Dawson's Creek* in their everyday life? What do they do with the show's images, characters, and storylines?

Analysis

Dawson's Creek is a lifestyle, "a way of life" (Williams, 1983), for many of the participants in this study. This is not surprising since mass media, in particular television, play an important role in the lives of most teenagers. For instance, when asked if she was a big television watcher, Stacy replied, "Oh yeah. I live on TV ... I have a daily thing." She views a regularly scheduled line-up of television shows every week, of which *Dawson's Creek* is a part. For her, and others, "living on television" encompasses a variety of activities, each of which means engaging with the show beyond merely watching its weekly episode.

A Social Experience

While *Dawson's Creek* can be an individual viewing experience, more commonly it is a dynamic social practice that transcends the television set and enters into the social circles of the teenage female. These social settings range from formal clubs such as the *Dawson's Creek* Club, to less formal gatherings, such as informal discussions among viewers during commercial breaks, at their schools the next day, or via email exchanges in particular listservs. The show serves as a system of socialization into an idealized teenage world – either you fit in, or you strive to be a part of it.

The experience of watching *Dawson's Creek* forms a cohesive bond uniting some of the study's participants in a "club," where all "members" are active in the meaning-making process. These viewers do not passively sit in front of their television sets; rather, they actively participate making sense of the world around them through the characters' experiences on the show. In a very important sense, these girls are not on their own as they go through adolescence. They are on this journey *together* and, through

this process, *Dawson's Creek* serves as a system of support through the inevitable "ups and downs" of these difficult years.

Kristy and Ann are the most visible in their club activities – they were both members of the *Dawson's Creek* Club in their high school. Kristy, the club's founder, describes the members as "hard-core." They designed a t-shirt which read, "Eat. Sleep. Watch *Dawson's Creek*" on the back and "*Dawson's Creek* Club, 7:18 pm, 2000-2001" on the front. The time referred to the club's designated meeting time: "She [Kristy] always told us to meet at 7:18, which never worked, we were always late," said Ann. The club had its own newsletter, *Up the Creek*, which contained information about upcoming meetings and events, scrapbooks, theme nights for meetings, a video archive of past episodes, a Web site, and a *Dawson's Creek* poster signed by the ten original club members. These activities were documented in their high school's yearbook, which helped recruit additional members. Kristy stated, "…the first year it was really small. Last year, it was so big, people just came for fun." The club's membership now consists of high school graduates who attend area colleges and drive long distances just to attend meetings.

Though both Ann and Kristy graduated from high school and attend separate universities, the club continues uniting former and current club members together as well as serving as an aid in making new friends. Ann, for instance, mentioned that she wore her shirt to her freshmen orientation, much to the dismay of her grandmother: "I wore it to orientation and I made so many friends! ... And my grandma was like, 'I can't believe you're going to wear that, somebody's going to make fun of you.' And I was like, no they're not making fun of me, that's for sure." Ann's comment suggests that Dawson's

Creek represents a teenage world that appeals to most participants and is, for many, not too far removed from their own lives: "The club is basically just a bunch of good friends who get together to socialize, to watch the show and see how it pertains to real life" (club's vice president, quoted in her high school yearbook). Through this social viewing experience, the members make connections between events unfolding on the television show and in their own lives.

This noticeable pattern of taking the show beyond the confines of the television sets does not end with viewers organized in clubs, like Kristy and Ann. For instance, Jessica reluctantly admitted that she owns a *Dawson's Creek* journal, and explained that she uses it only as place to write, an activity she enjoys. She quickly pointed out, as she tried to downplay her avid viewing of the show, that when *Dawson's Creek* first premiered, she "didn't go all out and buy everything that had to do with *Dawson's Creek*." Despite her denials of being an avid fan, however, Jessica acknowledged visiting the *Dawson's Creek* Web site regularly, reading the journals posted by the characters, and obtaining show scripts. The Web site is also important for Carly and Kristy, who visit it regularly for "spoiler" information regarding new episodes.

A Resonant Music Experience

Music plays an important role on *Dawson's Creek* in providing viewers with a resonant viewing experience. At the conclusion of an episode, the credits of each song and artist used as soundtrack for the show are listed. Several of the participants in this study mentioned the usefulness of that list in helping them extend their viewing experience into their music-listening experience, since hearing a song featured in a particular episode away from its context often provides the participant with an echoing

experience where she is able to remember the events that corresponded with a particular featured song. For instance, when Michelle hears a song she likes on an episode, she usually visits the show's Web site or the WB Web site for more information and the availability of the song.

For Elizabeth, the show has a distinct music "brand." While she does not download any songs featured on *Dawson's Creek* or buy any of the show's soundtracks, she still recognizes the "type" of music featured on the show: "Recently in my class my teacher got us listening to music everyday and when I hear the music sometimes, I will think, that sounds like a *Dawson's Creek* song." The link between the show and the music it features is also important for participants in the Dawson's Creek club. For instance, Kristy made two unofficial *Dawson's Creek* albums for club members as their graduation presents. For these fans, the albums serve as a reminder of their special friendship bond, which is inextricably linked to their Dawson's Creek viewing experience.

In sum, music provides an opportunity for viewers to remember and reflect on events that occurred in an episode without the aid of a television set. Simply hearing a song will bring back imagery and conversations between characters. This kind of experience resonates with participants as they share these experiences with other loyal viewers. This is one more way in which the show spills over its loyal viewers' everyday life.

Identifying with Dawson's Creek

Study participants identified with Dawson's Creek characters at several levels. Most commonly, participants found similarities – usually physical, though sometimes

related to personality – between characters and themselves, or between characters and their school friends. In many instances, the participants tried to typecast their friends to fit a certain character. On other occasions, participants felt that the character representations on the show were accurate reflections of the "cast of characters" present in their own high schools – e.g. the boy next door (Dawson), the smart female (Joey), the controversial and promiscuous female (Jen) and the all-around "good" guy (Pacey). In contrast, Jack was never mentioned since most participants did not know of anyone who had come out in their high schools.

Michelle stated that most of the females she knew who watched the show wanted to be just like its characters: "I bet a lot of people look up to Joey and Jen and want to be just like them, you know. I'm sure a lot of people do." She added, "I think it's very influential. The people, I mean like I don't do what they do, just because it's not real, it's fake and it's not something that most people would do. I don't think most people realize that." Notwithstanding her desire to distance herself from those who identify with the show's characters and her ability to distinguish between Dawson's Creek life and "real" life, Michelle also establishes analogies between the show's characters and people she knows. For instance, she mentioned a couple she knows who are similar to Dawson and Joey, and who are experiencing some troubles in their relationship with one another:

> My friend Amy, like she is dating this guy, Josh, like she used to be in love with him and they were friends before and he…I don't think he really likes her like that, but then she told him like, like not so much told him, but let him know that she liked him and they got together and now they are like on and off, it is like crazy, they have been on and off for a year and a half now.

Like Michelle, Jessica, also has a Dawson in her life:

> I think it is like me and that friend, we were best friends, I loved him to death, I would have done anything for him. He got a girlfriend last year, this is probably one of the first girlfriends besides like me and that was in eighth grade. We had a little thing. But he stopped talking to me because the girl thought he liked me. So, now he doesn't even talk to me and he's been talking crap about me. Yeah, and I trusted him more than anyone in the world. That's kind of like Dawson and Joey when things started getting rough.

Jessica also sees many parallels between Joey and herself: "She just seems really cool and I like how she has all the guy friends because that's basically me." Furthermore, Jessica stated, she wishes she could be more like Joey because of her character's focus on making good grades:

> I would rather be thought of as the smart girl just because I'm not…I'd rather be smart because you know I'm probably not going to get into good colleges or anything like that which I would rather have later on, so. Yeah, I would rather be the smart girl.

In addition, Jessica finds similarities between the characters and some of her friends. For instance, she believes that her friend Michelle is a lot like Jen, "she's not a whore or that like Jen was at the beginning, but for some reason, just the way she is in a way reminds me of Jen." Jessica also stated that her friend Jennifer is a lot like Andy, "She wasn't very stable and she didn't have much confidence in herself and she just reminds me of Andy," while she identifies her friend David with Jack ("He's not gay, he just reminds me of him … personality-wise").

Amanda has a more nuanced approach when establishing similarities between herself, her friends and the *Dawson Creek*'s characters. She identifies with Jen because "everyone say that I'm just like her" and she feels Jen is "more realistic" than the other "perfect, overdramatic" characters in the show. She does not see parallels between her

friends' personalities and the characters'. However, she sees "similarities in the situations that happen…Erica [one of her friends] was obsessed with Joey and went out of her way to be like Joey, so I saw similarities there." In similar fashion, Sally sees Pacey in some of her friends: "Just in the fact that Pacey is always getting into trouble and just, you know smart-aleck."

However, despite these different degrees of identification with the show's characters, participants found differences between *Dawson's Creek*'s version of teenage life and their own lives. For instance, Michelle expressed:

> You know, you're a teenager and you're going to have all of these obstacles and stuff, but you are always going to overcome them and it is like you will have good decisions and bad decisions and I think that they do good on the good decision/bad decision thing, but I don't know they seem to like, they make it unrealistic. Like the things that happen, but I mean, like, they make it dumb, you know. I mean they make you realize that they are never going to happen.

Moreover, Elizabeth states:

> They all seem to have their own little battles and their own little struggles and they end up coming back to each other for support and a lot of that is good and dandy. I don't really see that as being that realistic; sometimes you just have your problems and you just have to face them yourself and you don't have that crutch they have with each other to come back to.

Hence, according to these girls, teenage life is not as "easy" as the show portrays it to be. Furthermore, several of the participants, in particular the older ones, understood the fact that *Dawson's Creek* must have dramatic, "unrealistic" elements incorporated into its storylines to maintain viewership: "The writers realize that they are going to get the show out there more if it is a little more exaggerated, but at the same time, they don't want to take the time to make it more real" (Kim). In addition, Jessica pointed out that

the characters experience teenage life on a "large scale." In other words, she finds the characters and the plot somewhat exaggerated.

Even though participants noticed these discrepancies between the show's portrayal of teenage life and their own experiences, most of them were not bothered by the program's lack of racial diversity. "They don't have any other – I mean, they don't have any black people or other races really on the show. I think they missed that" (Jessica). "I think they might need a few other characters on there because I mean we all know these characters and it is probably just good to have someone new on because the others are getting old" (Michelle). Other participants did not even notice the show's lack of racial diversity: "It's pretty equal…They're pretty different" (Kim).

In stark contrast, Elizabeth, the sole non-white participant, was the only participant who found the show to be racially unbalanced:

> I think that their personalities are a good balance with each other, but I think that there are a lot of groups that could be represented that they don't…if they introduce another character I guess…from a different minority background or from a different socio-economic standing, then I think that would be interesting.

During the 2001-2002 season, an African-American character was introduced as Pacey's love interest. Instead of viewing this character as adding diversity to the show, Elizabeth saw the inclusion of this character as having little to no impact on the show's racial balance:

> I think that they were trying to bring it, I don't even think that, like, I even take that as a diversity issue, that was just kind of Pacey and his relationship issues. It didn't really, like, focus in on you know, who she was really, just what she was.

Amanda's recollection of this character corroborates Elizabeth's opinion. Amanda identified this character as "that cooking girl," in reference to the character's profession, but could remember nothing else about her.

In sum, these responses suggest that participants, in general, are not bothered by the "all-white" world of *Dawson's Creek*. Furthermore, these girls rarely question, and many times overlook, the show's lack of racial diversity, which mirrors their respective social circles. In contrast, many participants are aware of the dramatic requirements of the show, which—in turn—are the consequence of the commercial requirements of television (high ratings), and how these shape both characters and storylines. At the same time, these young women are able to relate to the characters and their experiences, as they make comparisons and analogies between themselves, their friends, and the show's characters, who become, in fact, also their "friends."

Surrogate Parent

On *Dawson's Creek*, parents do not play an active role in their children's (the characters) lives. Instead, the focus of the show is on the relationship between the characters. Parents are not featured in their traditional "parental" role, "teaching" their teenage children right from wrong and serving as a source of advice and guidance. Furthermore, when characters have problems, they seek out the support of their friends and not of their parents. Participants discussed these character/parents relationships and expressed that these accurately mirror their relationships with their own parents (Jessica). Participants characterized the onscreen characters/parents relationships as "distant" (Carly), adding that the characters' parents "just don't seem to care about them" (Stacy).

Additionally, participants commented that *Dawson's Creek's* storylines present a variety of topics, from drug use to sexual behavior. In this sense, the show prepares them for issues they will likely encounter in their own lives, and that they do not feel they can comfortably discuss with their parents.

> It's odd to see how much there are similarities in the things that happens, it's like, it works for them. It's really weird to see how it works out in real life and how it works on TV 'cause it's usually the same…It may just be because of my own weird little world, I have seen things on the show happen in my own life and to myself. I guess it's a pretty decent representation based on my own little bubble, my own environment (Amanda).

In this sense, *Dawson's Creek* serves the role of surrogate parent for these teenagers. "All these things that happen do relate to people's lives and how things happen. Like when they went to a rave, I went to a party one time and one of my friends almost overdosed" (Jessica). Ann said, "I don't know if I'd be more willing to talk about 'em, but they definitely face some stuff that I apply to my own life … people are not your friends…that type of thing."

Only Elizabeth questioned the show's usefulness for her everyday life:

> When they are faced with certain situations, you could be like – oh yeah, I can relate to that. I have had to do that. But I don't know if it's like taught me, well, next time I should maybe do that … I don't know if it's taught me.

In other words, although *Dawson's Creek* contains "real" elements of her teenage world, the show does not provide any insight on how to live in it.

In general, however, these participants rely on the show to address issues that relate to their experiences as teenagers. According to our conversations, *Dawson's Creek* often provides them with advice on how to handle issues. The show also offers them the

reassuring message that they are, in fact, "normal" and the experiences they are facing are indeed that of the "normal" teenager. This, coupled with their perception that their relationships with their own parents is "distant," allowed *Dawson's Creek* to step in and assume the (important) role of surrogate parent.

Conclusion

This study attempts to understand the popularity of *Dawson's Creek* by fleshing out the meanings that participants associate with the show. Mindful that the audience, "should be understood as producers of meaning instead of as mere consumers of meaning taking up prescribed textual positionings" (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 108), this study locates "everyday life" as the site where "concrete articulations" between representation and consumption, and the text and audience, take place. As such, consumption is an important component of the television viewing process and should not be overlooked or discounted. Viewers are not simply dupes, rather, they are actively involved in the meaning-making process.

Dawson's Creek as a Way of Life

To argue *Dawson's Creek* is just a television show misses the point. Dawson, Joey, Jen, Pacey and Jack are more than just characters, they are friends to some participants, and are "everyday" examples of high school students to others. The show portrays a view of the teenage world, and each viewer buys into the portions of it that they want to and incorporate those elements into their everyday lives.

Dawson's Creek is used by participants in a variety of ways. For some, the show serves as a "template" for their everyday lives on how to be a teenager and how to fit into

the teenage world (especially for young viewers such as Jessica and Michelle). In fact, these viewers use this template to the point where they are able to typecast their friends and situations within the show's defined nature of the teenage experience (Jessica and *Joey*; Amanda and *Jen*). For these viewers, the "reality" of the teenage experience is that one present in *Dawson's Creek*. For example, Jessica brings to life the character of Dawson every time she mentions her male neighbor who lives down the street from her. Michelle too brings to life the relationship between Dawson and Joey when she uses their relationship as a comparison with that of two of her friends.

For other participants, the show serves as a locus for discussion about uncomfortable and controversial topics that the participants do not feel comfortable in discussing with their parents – e.g.: drugs and sex. Even if these viewers have not experienced some of the issues first hand, they are still able to draw upon the characters' experiences in dealing with these subjects. The experiences depicted on screen can be considered "equipment for living," or "a pattern of experience that is sufficiently representative of our social structure, that recurs sufficiently … for people to 'need a word for it' and to adopt an attitude towards it" (Burke, 1957, p. 300). As Burke describes it, literature (in this case media takes the places of literature) serves the role of helping people deal with situations that arise in their lives: "The reading of a book on the attaining of success is in itself the symbolic attaining of that success. It is while they read that these readers are 'succeeding'…he gets it in symbolic form by the mere reading itself" (p. 299). In other words, these participants live vicariously through what they watch on the television screen, and in the process, gain the tools to help them through the acts of coping with one's everyday life.

Similarly, it is through the synergistic relationship between the show, its viewers and the music featured on episodes that a resonating music experience is established. Participants recognize and/or purchase the music featured on the show (Kristy, Ann and Erica) further enriching their *Dawson's Creek* experience. Peterson sums it up well: "Watching television, listening to music, and other habitual practices are ways of marking and ranking events, rituals, and identities. Their importance rests in the ways they mark out the social order" (Peterson, 1987, p. 38). The way these participants use *Dawson's Creek* establishes a routine, a way of life, or a way of making sense of the, sometimes, turbulent teenage years.

No longer can shows like *Dawson's Creek* be discounted as meaningless popular culture. Indeed, viewers of these shows are actively decoding these texts and incorporating these shows' messages into their everyday lives as teenagers. While the premise of *Dawson's Creek* may sound simple and unimportant, the quest of teenagers to define themselves and make sense of the world around them is anything but simple. Because of its popularity, *Dawson's Creek* is an important show with concrete implications for teenagers. Its popularity should encourage us to examine more deeply the intricate relationships between the text and the audience, the construction of reality, serial genres and the pleasure audience's derive from them.

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Running head: BOUDINOT IDEOLOGY

Civilization, Christianity, and Cherokeeness:

The three layers of elitism in the writings of Cherokee editor Elias Boudinot

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Civilization, Christianity, and Cherokeeness:

The three layers of elitism in the writings of Cherokee editor Elias Boudinot

Introduction

Elias Boudinot became the first Native American editor of the first Native American newspaper, *Cherokee Phoenix,* but the Georgia militia and others decided the paper and the Cherokee Nation had to go. In the end, Boudinot was assassinated on June 22, 1839, in present-day Oklahoma, allegedly because he signed the Treaty of New Echota, forcing the removal of the Cherokee from their ancestral lands. This basic historical account has been discussed increasingly by journalism and mass communication scholars over the past 25-plus years (e.g., Murphy, 1977; LaCourse, 1979; Luebke, 1979; Riley, 1979; Luebke, 1981; Murphy & Murphy, 1981; Trahant, 1995; Sloan & Startt, 1996, pp. 221-222; Folkerts & Teeter, 1998, pp. 106-109). These articles and media history books sufficiently introduce the journalism of Boudinot to media students, but they do not spend much time connecting that journalism with what may have been happening culturally in the life and times of Boudinot. Thankfully, there are some excellent studies of the ideologies behind the white coverage of Native Americans (e.g. Coward, 1999), as well as the ideologies of the Native Americans writers themselves (e.g. Peyer, 1997, Konkle, 1997). Journalism scholars could connect the ideological studies with the journalistic history to better understand the forces driving Boudinot and others during that fateful time for the Southeastern Indians and the whites that decided to uproot them. (Folkerts & Teeter, 1998, p. 109).

To better understand potential ideologies of Boudinot, an ideological critique was performed on an extensive compilation of Boudinot's writings (Perdue, 1996). This critique

describes Boudinot as an elitist in his ideology, someone who could not conceive of being anything less than his view of a properly civilized, Christian Cherokee. His disdain for what he saw as incivility, paganism, and the evils of white America was evident in his writings as a journalist, a missionary, and politician. This created a tension between the realities of what was and what he thought should have been for Cherokee and the encroaching white settlers.

When the Europeans invaded the North American continent, cultures invariably clashed. This radical cultural change was evident during the early 19th Century as the Cherokee, Choctaw, Seminole, Muscogee (Creek), and Chickasaw became known as the "Five Civilized Tribes." Boudinot, as an example of this collision of white and Native cultures, accepted Christianity, trained to become a missionary to his own people, tried to make money in a capitalistic system, and forsook many traditional Cherokee ways. Still, few journalism studies have connected the religious, socio-economic, and cultural issues of Boudinot, who had a complex, unique worldview or ideology after being indoctrinated in the evangelical fervor of the Second Great Awakening and the commercial progress of a burgeoning capitalistic system.

For instance, Boudinot first resisted the idea of removal of the Cherokee from their ancestral home – which included parts of Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, and North Carolina -- to the Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. Later, Boudinot reversed his editorial policy and joined other Cherokee to sign the Treaty of New Echota, a move that contributed to the forced removal, the deaths of hundreds of Native Americans, and Boudinot's own assassination. Yet, scholars typically do not ask what could have been motivating that decision. This paper argues that Boudinot made that decision, like all other decisions, under the influence of his elitist notions of being civilized, Christian, and Cherokee.

To illustrate this thesis, this paper will discuss the theoretical framework for the ideological critique, present a literature review detailing and interpreting the life and death of Boudinot, discuss the methodology of the ideological critique, and present the results. Then, a discussion about the heuristic properties of the research will be given in conclusion.

Theoretical framework and literature review

Because the research question involves the influence of culture upon early Native American journalism, this study adopts a social constructivist position; that is, Native American journalism grew from influences of culture. More specifically, this study posits that culture produces ideology, which produces cultural artifacts, which reveal the ideology and culture. This theoretical framework will explain how social construction and culture will be used to understand Boudinot's work, though the author recognizes there are many variations in these concepts, depending on the cultural perspective of the scholar. Also, this theoretical framework will discuss five Anglo political ideologies, which would serve as cultural descriptors, as well as three Cherokee cultural descriptors.

The Cherokee culture during the early 1800s was heavily influenced by early Cherokee society and Anglo-American society, so it would make sense that an ideological conception by Boudinot would have been constructed when those cultures collided. Ideas evolve, then either join each other or depart. Syncretism – or "the mixture of old meanings with the new so that the essential nature of each is lost" (Hiebert, 1981, p. 378) – takes place between competing ideas or cultures. When ideas blend, new ideas develop. One of the most cogent, pertinent explanations of this phenomenon is by Berger and Luckmann (1989).

> It is important to bear in mind that most modern societies are pluralistic. This means that they have a **shared core universe** [emphasis mine], taken for granted as such, and different partial universes coexisting in a state of mutual accommodation. The latter probably have some ideological functions, but outright conflict between ideologies has been replaced by varying degrees of tolerance or even co-operation. Such a situation, brought about by a constellation of non-theoretical factors, presents

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> the traditional experts with severe theoretical problems. Administering a tradition with age-old monopolistic pretensions they have to find ways of theoretically legitimating the demonopolization that has taken place. Sometimes they take the option of continuing to voice the old totalitarian claims as if nothing had happened, but very few people are likely to take these claims seriously. Whatever the experts do, the pluralistic situation changes not only the social position of the traditional definitions of reality, but also the way in which these are held in the consciousness of individuals (p. 125).

Social constructivism posits that understandings of the world are created socially. Schwardt (1998), while quoting Gergen (1985) in part, said, "The social constructionist approach is predicated on the assumption that 'the terms by which the world is understood are social artifacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people'" (p. 240). Therefore, a social constructivist study of the writings, or social artifacts, of Boudinot would help scholars to understand the cultural interchanges between the Native Americans and the Anglo invaders.

Culture can be defined with three categories, according to Williams (1981).

> There is, first, the 'ideal,' in which culture is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values. … Then, second, there is the 'documentary,' in which culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded. … Finally, third, there is the 'social' definition of culture, in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour (p. 43).

Each of these three categories seems plausible for a conceptual definition of culture for this study; however, they are incomplete by themselves or even taken as a whole. "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams, 1985, p. 87). Another definition of culture, which seems to be suited for a social construction argument, may be one by Fiske (1989), who was quoted by Cormack (1992): "Culture consists of the meanings that we make of social experience and of social relations, and the pleasures, or unpleasures, we find in them" (p. 26). Hiebert (1981), who had a particular concern about the collision of evangelical Christian culture with other cultures, defines culture as "the

integrated system of learned patterns or behavior, ideas and products characteristic of society" (p. 367). These other definitions relate within Williams' categorizations of culture. So, it makes sense to let each conceptualization inform the discussion, with particular focus upon the way culture influences the journalism of Boudinot. And, this author does not want to argue whether the Cherokee or Anglo cultures are superior – enough of those arguments have existed for years, with little resolution. Rather, each culture will have to stand or fall on its own in the minds of the readers.

Ideology is a logical extension of a discussion about culture and its impact upon journalism. For this study, ideology is the overall worldview of a person that manifests itself in culture, or (w)hen a particular definition of reality comes to be attached to a concrete power interest ...." (Berger & Luckmann, 1989, p. 123). This has a social dimension, as ideology relies "upon concrete vested interests within the society in question" (p. 124). Since ideology is rooted in "a concrete power interest," it makes sense to study political ideologies, as power interests are inherently political. Ideology is viewed from a social lens during this study. Williams (1985) argued that ideology is "abstract and false thought" (p. 155) and that "silly people rely on ideology" (p. 157). Still, this study sees ideology as a broader worldview, not as an illogical assumption. And, this study does not address the question of whether the political ideologies in question are true or false.

This conceptualization of ideology relates to Cormack's (1995) understanding of ideology as culture in action, or "ideology given a certain expression" (p. 26). Some results of these ideologically based actions are cultural products (p. 26). This is a most important concept in this ideological critique, as an expectation will be that Boudinot's ideology will be found in his journalistic and religious works, which are cultural products or artifacts.

Ideology will be categorized through A.A. Berger's (2000) adaptation of Wildavasky's four categories of political thought: individualism, elitism (or hierarchy), egalitarianism, and fatalism (p. 86; see also Wildavsky, 1998). Berger supposes that these four ideologies are all necessary to support democratic society (p. 86), and that individualism and elitism are most prevalent in the United States (p. 87).

> Individualists believe in free competition and as little government involvement in things as possible: government should maintain a level playing field and protect private property. **Hierarchical elitists believe that stratification and hierarchy are necessary and correct, but they have a sense of obligation toward those beneath them** [emphasis mine]. Egalitarians focus their attention on the fact that everyone has certain needs that should be looked after (thus, they try to raise up the fatalists), and criticize elitists and individualists. Egalitarians tend to be in opposition to mainstream American political thought. And they believe they are victims of bad luck and tend to be apolitical (p. 87).

Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990) had listed autonomy among the four political ideologies (p. 8), but filed to explain its later deletion. Still, the term perhaps would belong among the theory of political cultures, as there are those rare individuals who desire to live alone, apart from society. This could help explain why some Cherokee supported forced removal from the encroaching whites.

The political ideologies are "socially constructed" (Wildavsky, 1998, p. 113). Elitism or hierarchy is "(w)hen an individual's social environment is characterized by strong group boundaries and binding prescriptions …" (p. 5). Then, "(s)trong group boundaries coupled with minimal prescriptions produce social relations that are *egalitarian*" (p. 5).

"Individuals who are bound neither by group incorporation nor prescribed roles inhabit an *individualistic* social content" (p. 5), and "(a) person who finds himself/herself subject to binding prescriptions and is excluded from group membership exemplifies the fatalistic way of life" (p. 5).

These political ideologies may be seen in Cherokee concepts. Originally, Cherokee culture was locally communal, which "consisted of shared norms, shared cultural orientations, symbols, ceremonies, and kinship organization" (Champagne, 1992, p. 38). Norgren (1996) describes colonial British society as individualistic and traditional Cherokee society as communal or egalitarian (p. 4). Cherokee society was divided into seven clans, and the Cherokee were not allowed to marry within their own clan (p. 38). The society was matrilineal, which meant that the women in the society had an enormous amount of influence and power. During the 18th Century, religion was more important than civil matters, and government itself was theocratic (pp. 39-40). In fact, the priests were most influential in political policy (p. 48). The "theocracy" of the Cherokee Nation first was based upon a traditional naturalistic religion involving magic, witchcraft, and other manifestations of shamanism (p. 16). "In the Southeastern worldviews, the absence of strong this-worldly and otherworldly tensions, combine with a strong this-worldly orientation and the view that transgressing sacred law and norms were the cause of this-world misfortunes and evil, accentuated traditionalistic orientations toward change in the existing institutional order" (p. 16).

The Cherokee were innately suspicious of anything that disrupted harmony in society.

> Disharmony in the social world or with the spirit world was certain to bring misfortune or trouble. Harmony and order were contingent on keeping the sacred laws and rules of society, which included strict rules against disturbing the harmony and balance of cosmic forces (p. 22).

Suppose then that a Cherokee editorial espoused something that had upset the social world of the Cherokee people. It would be easy to see how the Cherokee would have responded to that upsetting of social balance by exercising restraint on the press. This in fact did happen when Chief Ross attempted to censor editor Elias Boudinot when Boudinot had

changed his mind and supported the ceding of lands to the United States and the forced removal to the Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma (Perdue, 1996, p. 165).

Boudinot's role in Cherokee society was socially constructed. In a society of elites and non-elites, planters/traders and hunters, Boudinot's role as an editor may have provided functions beyond journalism.

> As the most important leader of the pro-treaty faction, Boudinot represented a new type of educated Indian who was neither a trader or [sic] a planter. It would seem appropriate, given Boudinot's interests, to classify him, along with Sequoyah, as representing an intellectual class of Indians, which could be placed in the tradition of the tribal wise person or medicine person. Of course, the important distinction between Boudinot and the traditional wise person is that Boudinot could quickly spread his ideas throughout the nation with the aid of his bilingual newspaper (Spring, 1996, pp. 97-98).

This makes sense, as Boudinot had been trained to be an evangelical missionary to his own people. Boudinot was expected by some to adhere to cultural norms and not to advocate Anglo culture. In fact, his efforts, along with those of other Cherokee leaders, were considered by some to be "a sophisticated campaign of public relations" for the rights of the Cherokees (Norgren, 1996, p. 44). Still, the clash of the Anglo and Native ideologies resulted in a permanent change in the Cherokee.

Coward (1999), in an examination of the writings of Horace Greeley and other Anglo writers of the time, said:

> In short, the standards and characteristics of Euro-American life – individualism, capitalism, democracy, Christianity – were used to explain and understand Native Americans in the nineteenth century. Measured by such standards, Native Americans were clearly found wanting. For a reformer like Greeley, a man who very much wanted to do the 'right thing,' the choice was clear. Push them to become civilized, or watch them waste away and disappear. This was the ideology that motivated Greeley and a host of other nineteenth-century journalists for decades, an ideology that created and sustained an elaborate, useful, and highly mythologized set of understandings of Native Americans and their place in American life (p. 3).

This study refuses to measure the Cherokee by Western values and make value judgments accordingly. Rather, this study simply asks to what extent these Western and Native values may be reflected in Boudinot's writings, and thus in the Cherokee themselves, during the early 19th Century.

As stated above, Elias Boudinot has been the subject of numerous works in the past, ranging from a dissertation about Boudinot as a journalist (see Luebke, 1981) to brief historical discussions about him in important works on the Cherokee in general (see Norgren, 1996; McLoughlin, 1994). Readers can find works that discuss his quest for civilization (see Malcomson, 2000), or other works that discuss his deep devotion to evangelical Christianity (see McLoughlin, 1994), and other research that discuss his battles with his Cherokeeness (see Ehle, 1988). However, few bring these concepts together. One of the most detailed biographies was a dissertation by Luebke (1981), which is often quoted because of its details. However, few journalism and mass communication studies bring these three concepts together in a cohesive understanding of Boudinot as a complex man. This ideological critique attempts to understand these three notions as characteristics of Boudinot's overt elitism.

A most helpful work is a compilation of Boudinot's writings, along with history and commentary, by Perdue (1996). It was from this collection of Boudinot's main, by-lined work that the ideological critique was performed. Perdue discusses the related issues of civilization, Christianity, and Cherokeeness of Boudinot. However, her arguments never explicitly link them through Boudinot's elitism. Perdue (1998, pp. 541-545) once referred to Boudinot as a "proto-elitist" in a review of what may be the best expression of the ideology of Native American writers – Peyer's *The tutor'd mind: Indian missionary-writers in antebellum*

America (1997). This citation was discovered after the initial ideological critique, so the phrase helped to confirm the findings.

Boudinot's Christianity as well as his Cherokee elitism interacted with each other, according to Peyer (pp. 222-223).

> His conviction that his special qualifications gave him the right and responsibility to make decisions for the benefit of the entire Cherokee Nation appears to have been as much a characteristic of the Cherokee proto-elite as it was of the more conservative Old Light missionaries who influenced his life (p. 223).

Peyer and Konkle (1997) look to colonialism for their theoretical frameworks, and this author believes colonialism and its variants may have some promise for future study in relation to the journalism of Boudinot. Citing Horvath (1972), Peyer said, "Colonialism, in its broader context, is a form of intergroup domination, or control exerted by individuals or groups over the territory and/or social behavior of other individuals or groups" (p. 1). This theoretical framework informs understanding of the invasion of the North American continent by whites. As alluded to in the discussion below, it could be argued that Boudinot and other Cherokee elites were "colonial" over other Cherokee. Thus, colonialism would be a fruitful field for intellectual plowing in this type of research.

Though they connect Boudinot's ideology with his journalism, scholars like Perdue and Peyer study Boudinot from a perspective of history and literature. Their studies, along with the numerous historical research by journalism and mass communication scholars, provide excellent information for criticism and synthesis. The differing disciplines inform each other, and therefore academia is better informed of the complexities of Boudinot.

Methodology

Theda Perdue compiled the available major writings of Elias Boudinot into one volume: *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot* (1996), "except repetitious and nonanalytical editorials from the *Cherokee Phoenix*" (p. ix). For this study, each of the writings

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were analyzed as a broad sample of Boudinot's works. Overt phases that seemed to be motivated by one of the four political ideologies were identified.

Like Konkle (1997) did with the infamous Cherokee Cases before the United States Supreme Court, as well as coverage of those cases in the *Phoenix*, these texts were treated as cultural artifacts. And, as Konkle wisely warns, a research needs to "read and record carefully and critically" when study these types of documents (p. 477).

Cormack's (1995) five-part ideological critique was used as a systematic way of approaching the texts (pp. 28-35). The research examined content, which includes judgments, vocabulary, characters, and actions; structure, which could be diachronic or "temporal ordering" (pp. 29-30); absence, which is better understood as avoidances; style; and mode of address, which could be seen as direct/indirect or specific/general.

Then the statements were categorized by the four political ideologies outlined in Berger (2000) and Wildavsky (1998). The findings were not quantified; rather, this author simply believed that their existence were worth reporting. Commonalities and themes were readily apparent, from the beginning until the end of the analysis of the entire compilation of Boudinot's works. For assurance and guidance, the findings also were compared to historical and philosophical conclusions by significant secondary sources. These were consistently supportive of the theory that elitism was a strong ideological influence in Boudinot.

Then, the elitism was subcategorized by the positions Boudinot would take – people were either Indian or white, Indian or black, saved or lost, civilized or uncivilized. These create artificial dichotomies between where Boudinot saw himself and were Boudinot saw others.

Caution should be used in categorizing the cultural descriptors, as Thompson, Mills & Wildavsky (1990) argue that categorizing these cultures should not lead to dualism, or an either/or argument (p. 21). In fact, they claim that all of these political cultures are necessary for each other and for the world in general (p. 21). So it would be expected that evidence could be found for all of these. Therefore, other researchers, particularly with other worldviews, could arrive at differing results from this study.

Still, this author believes the theme of elitism is predominant in the writings of Boudinot, as other scholars have noted.

Results

A brief history is necessary to introduce the findings of the ideological critique. Genetically, Boudinot allegedly was one-sixteenth white and the rest Cherokee. He was born with the name Gallengina, or Buck Watie, in 1804 to a family of Cherokee who wanted him and his brother Stand Watie to become educated and prosperous. According to a Cherokee tradition, Buck Watie later took the name and patronage of someone he admired – Elias Boudinot, a former member of the Continental Congress who served as president of the American Bible Society (Perdue, 1996, p. 6). Both brothers had extraordinary careers, as Boudinot became the first Native American editor of a newspaper, while Watie became one of the last Confederate generals to surrender at the end of the Civil War. However, neither fully escaped who he was as a Cherokee, even though the infusion of white ideas created an irresistible and irreconcilable tension that haunted them until their deaths.. Both wanted to have a better life without interference from government, and both made an impact on society, though people might question issues like their support of removal, equivocation on slavery, and Watie's later support of the Confederacy (see Ehle, 1988, p. 389).

Boudinot's marriage in 1826 to Harriet Ruggles Gold, a white woman he met while studying at the Andover Theological Seminary in New England, created an immediate controversy. Over the next year, Boudinot taught school, spoke about the needs of the Cherokees, and wrote, all in the attempt to civilize himself and the Cherokee. In 1827, the Cherokee Nation offered Boudinot the job of editor of the new *Cherokee Phoenix*, a bilingual newspaper meant for Cherokee and white benefactors alike. As discussed below, Boudinot's tenure and subsequent resignation in 1832 were marked by triumph, progress, conflict, innuendo, and sadness during the "Removal" era. After Boudinot migrated with the Cherokee on the infamous "Trail of Tears" to eastern Oklahoma, a group of Cherokee murdered Boudinot at the young age of 35 in June 1839.

Based upon his indoctrination in the white culture, as well as his apparent stubbornness and personal successes, the initial expectation was that Boudinot would be an individualist, one who relied upon his own thoughts and education to solve his own problems. When he resigned, Boudinot said that he could not compromise his own notions to conform to those of the government (Perdue, 1996, p. 163). In fact, Christianity promoted individualism among the Cherokee (McLoughlin, 1994, p. 15). Boudinot might have been a fatalist, with Calvinistic influences about the unshakable will of God. In the final letter listed in Perdue's compilation, Boudinot seemed to pray to Providence concerning a doubtful future for the Cherokee: "May God preserve us from such a destiny" (p. 225). Egalitarianism might have been his ideology, as he hoped to raise the lower classes of Cherokee to an equal level with the whites and elite Cheorkee.

Ultimately, Boudinot divided the world into the saved and lost, white and Indian, poor and rich, ignorant and educated. This indicates a deep-seated elitism, which would be the best descriptor of his ideology. He often framed his discussions of the Cherokee

situation in terms of being "civilized" or "Christian." Boudinot also took great pride in being a Cherokee, contrary to those who might think he sold out his heritage and people when he signed the Treaty of New Echota to allow removal to the Indian Territory. Boudinot also took great pride in being civilized and Christian. He did not consider himself to be lost, poor, or ignorant. But he was still Cherokee, which meant he never, ever would have been accepted as an equal in the society of the Anglo invaders. Despite his pride in his Cherokeeness, this had to have severely troubled Boudinot.

Evangelical Christianity clearly played a large part in the life of Boudinot and some of the Cherokee in general during the early 1800s. This era saw the Second Great Awakening (Norgren, 1996, p. 78), a time when religious fervor swept across the eastern United States (see also Gaustad, 1990) This fervor affected the Native Americans, as missionaries became full of zeal to convert them (see Brainerd, 1822). At the age of seven, Boudinot began his education in a school run by Moravian missionaries. At the age of 16, in 1820, Boudinot converted to Christianity while a student at a school for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Cornwall, Connecticut (Perdue, 1996, p. 8). Later, he enrolled in Andover Theological Seminary to study to become a missionary to his own people. This experience cannot be divorced from his career, for Boudinot continually used the printing press, the pulpit lectern, and the public square to spread evangelical Christianity.

Boudinot explicitly stated that he would promote religion throughout *The Cherokee Phoenix* (p. 90) when he became editor in 1827. The federal government subsidized the Cherokee Nation, which provided capital and operating expenses to Boudinot and the newspaper (p. 227, note 11). The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions also subsidized Boudinot's salary when Boudinot said he would not serve because the white

printer would make more than he would as the Native editor (p. 87). Surprisingly, even though Boudinot claimed to promote religion, Landini (1990) found in a quantitative content analyses of *The Cherokee Pheonix* that Boudinot devoted only 5.9 percent of the paper's content to religion, as opposed to his successor, Elijah Hicks, who had devoted 12.5 percent to religion. Still, religion was an overt theme for Boudinot's writings and life.

Boudinot's first known published article – a letter to the editor of *Missionary Herald* – was at the age of 17, a year after his conversion (Perdue, 1996, p. 43-44). In it, Boudinot was full of faith and vitality as a young man who spoke of the "providence of God," (p. 43) which would not be surprising for a man under the influence of Calvinists who believed that God was a sovereign who governed the affairs of people (cf. Hatch, 1989, p. 170). He also foreshadowed his own dreams, or the dreams of the missionaries, by hoping "that numbers here (at Cornwell) may be trained up, who shall go into the vineyard of the Lord, and be faithful laborers to bringing many unto Christ, who are now sitting in darkness" (p. 44). This idea of Natives being in "darkness" shows that Boudinot had already drawn a distinction between himself and most of his people, since the majority were not Christian at that time (Perdue, 1996, p. 148) and since he wanted to help his people learn what he had learned.

One of the most instructive works of Boudinot was "An Address to the Whites," which was a sermon he preached along the East Coast in an attempt to secure funds for the founding of the newspaper. He declared, "The shrill sound of the Savage yell shall die away as the roaring of far distant thunder; and the Heaven wrought music will gladden the affrighted wilderness" (p. 74). It makes the reader wonder how Cherokee might have felt to have been referred to in this fashion by one of their own people. He referred to advances by the Cherokee, including an alphabet by Sequoyah, and supposed, "The most informed and

judicious of our nation, believe that such a press would go further to remove ignorance, and her offspring superstition and prejudice, than all other means" (p. 76). In this address, he spoke with the voice of an elitist, one who asked educated white Christians to help educate and convert Cherokee. By using utopian language of a kingdom and heaven ruled by Jesus Christ, which has been supposed by some Christians, Boudinot appealed to people to give to his cause. What was his promise to them? "When all the kingdoms of this earth shall die away and their beauty and power shall perish, his name shall live and shine as a twinkling star; those for whose benefit he done his deeds of charity shall call him blessed, and they shall add honor to his immortal head" (p. 78).

His editorials as editor of the *Phoenix* were generally the same topic – the continuous improvement of the condition of the Cherokee. Early in his tenure, on March 28, 1828, Boudinot wondered, "Where have we an example in the whole history of man, of a Nation or tribe, removing in a body, from a land of civil and religious means, to a perfect wilderness, *in order to be civilized*" (p. 96). Here, he explicitly stands against removal to the Indian Territory, even though a small number of Cherokee had migrated to Arkansas by that time. Later, Boudinot changed his mind as he saw resisting the Anglo invaders as futile (pp. 208-225).

Ironically, Boudinot chastised missionaries who entered political matters, "as their sole object is to afford religious instruction" (pp. 96-97). White missionary Samuel Worcester worked with Boudinot on the *Phoenix* and was involved in political matters (p. 127). In fact, Worcester was once accused of being the actual editor, a charge that Boudinot refuted (p. 19). Worcester also would become embroiled in denominational controversies (Kilpatrick, 1978, p. 34). This was something that Boudinot had promised would not happen in the pages of the *Phoenix*.

> We shall avoid as much as possible, controversy on disputed doctrinal points in religion. Though we have our particular belief on this important subject, and perhaps are as strenuous upon it, as some of our brethren of a different faith, yet we conscienciously [sic] think, & in this thought we are supported by men of judgment that it would be injudicious, perhaps highly pernicious, to introduce to this people, the various minor differences of Christians. Our object is not sectarian, and if we had a wish to support, in our paper, the denomination with which we have the honor and privilege of being connected, yet we know our incompetency [sic] for the task (p. 93).

Since Worcester and his mission board supported the paper financially, it is not surprising that their views would take precedence in the paper.

Worcester became embroiled in the controversy about removal when the state of Georgia arrested him for living in the Cherokee Nation without a permit. He had refused to get such a permit. Boudinot editorialized:

> The State of Georgia is a Christian State—Its laws are founded on Christian principles, and the Governor, we suppose, is at least a nominal Christian. The Superiority of Christian laws over the rest of the world consists in their mildness.—The guilty are punished not in anyway which may partake of cruelty, but *in mercy*. It is therefore, in the constitution of Georgia, most properly made the duty of the Governor to execute the laws in mercy. It has appeared to us, however, in some of the circumstances we have related in the execution of the Georgia laws over this nation, that there has been exhibited too much of a vindictive spirit. The case of Mr. Worchester was certainly one which demanded, at least, forbearance and that mercy which the Governor has in his oath promised to observe (p. 129).

In this passage, the ideas of Christianity and civilization are readily seen. Boudinot chose to take up the cause of Worcester, perhaps as a friend, or perhaps as a fellow missionary. The choice of characters and actions, though, indicates his appeal to Christian principles for dealing with Christians. It must be noted that Boudinot could be benevolent and tolerant towards those with whom he had disagreed, for he gladly reported to congregations that certain elderly people were no longer burned as witches in the Cherokee Nation (p. 75).

Boudinot also spent editorial fodder in answering what he felt were ungrounded claims by whites against the Cherokee. One such issue was whether the Cherokee could

survive on the game available then in southern Appalachia, a charge made by the Committee of Indian Affairs in the U.S. House of Representatives (p. 114).

> Whoever really believes that the Cherokee subsist on game, is most wretchedly deceived, and is grossly ignorant of existing facts. *The Cherokee do not live upon the chase*, but upon the fruits of the earth produced by their labour. We should like to see any person point to a single family in this nation who obtain their clothing and provisions by hunting. *We* know of no one (p. 114).

Whether the Congressmen thought they were being benevolent to Cherokee by removing them is doubtful. With the intrusion of whites into ancestral lands, the game had been depleted. Boudinot may have been following the advice of President Jefferson, who told the Cherokee chiefs that farming was the preferable way to live. "Go on, my children, in the same way and be assured the further you advance in it the happier and more respectable you will be" (Jefferson, 1984, p. 561).

Interestingly, Boudinot's last letter recorded in Perdue's compilation accentuated the theme of Cherokee improvement, yet with a more mature, darker tone. Boudinot had left his position as editor and become a politician, serving as a member of the Cherokee Council and later signing the Treaty of New Echota, which guaranteed the removal. Boudinot wrote a letter to reply to Chief John Ross during the ongoing disagreement over removal of the Cherokee to Indian Territory. In this letter (pp. 208-225), Boudinot railed against Ross, saying, "Indeed, you seem to have forgotten that your people are a community of moral beings, capable of an elevation to an equal standing with the most civilized and virtuous, or a deterioration to the level of our most degraded of our race" (p. 222). He must have bought into the fallacious notion that the Native American was worse than the white person and needed "improvement." For instance, in a long epistle, Boudinot launches into a sermon about the inroads of alcohol among the Cherokee. In this, the reader can see the elitism of Boudinot, despite his seemingly sincere wishes for a better situation for all of the Cherokee.

> Look, my dear sir, around you, and see the progress that vice and immorality have already made! See the spread of intemperance and the wretchedness and misery it has already occasioned! I need not reason with a man of your sense and discernment, and of your observation, to show the debasing character of that vice to our people – you will find an argument in every tippling shop in the country – you will find its cruel effects in the bloody tragedies that are frequently occurring – in the frequent convictions and executions for murders, and in the tears and groans of the widows and fatherless, rendered homeless, naked and hungry, by this vile curse of our race. And it has stopped its cruel ravages with the power or poorer classes of our people? Are the higher orders, if I may so speak, left untainted? While there are honorable exceptions in all classes, a security for a future renovation under other circumstances, it is not to be denied that, as a people, we are making a rapid tendency to a general immorality and debasement (p. 224).

To Boudinot at that time, there were two classes of Cherokee – those who were civilized and Christian, and those who were not. As an elitist, Boudinot was interested in seeing the conditions of his people improved (see Berger, 2000, p. 87). In the preceding quotation, it is important to note that Boudinot again practiced foreshadowing, even though he probably did not realize it. Because he signed the Treaty of New Echota, he allegedly violated a Cherokee edict against giving away tribal lands. He was knifed and hatcheted to death in what some considered a legal execution for violating Cherokee law (Ehle, 1988, p. 375). Others suggest that the perpetrators carried out the Cherokee tradition of blood revenge for the lost lives on the Trail of Tears (p. 374). At any rate, one of the most brilliant minds of the Cherokee Nation in specific and the United States in general was silenced, and his body was buried many miles away from his ancestral home.

This paper argues that Boudinot chose to remove to the Indian Territory, in part, because he had decided that creating a cultured Cherokee nation would be better served by separating from the whites. This was a utilitarian decision. He did not change his ideology to accommodate the white wishes. Rather, after President Jackson failed to enforce the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Worcester vs. Georgia* (31 U.S. 15, 1832) that the Cherokee had legal rights (Smith, 1998, p. 518), Boudinot decided to withdraw from the whites. In fact, he

said in a letter to the editor, after he had resigned as editor, that he did not want to "[s]ubmit and peaceable come under the dominion of the oppressor, and suffer, which we most assuredly must if we make that choice, a *moral death*!" (Perdue, 1996, p. 173). This was a decidedly Cherokee notion at the time. For instance, a Cherokee who felt polluted by something or someone would bathe in creeks and rivers for ritualistic cleansing (Hudson, 1976, p. 317). This sounds strikingly familiar to some concepts of evangelical Christian baptism. When people convert to Christianity, especially to some evangelical versions, they may be baptized, or immersed in water to show the world that they have converted. This must have particularly appealed to the Cherokee and other southeastern Indians who practiced ceremonial cleansing (McLoughlin, 1994, p. 75). Perhaps, in the recesses of his mind, Boudinot saw the crossing of the Mississippi on the way to Indian Territory as a way to cleanse the people from the pollution of the white man. The Cherokee typically tried to keep out the vices of the white man, but to no avail (Ehle, 1988, p. 97). Yet, the issue of absence is apparent here, because Boudinot rarely referred to Cherokee notions and traditions, except to criticize them (cf. Perdue, 1996, p. 95, etc.).

However, this idea of removing to the West would have been repugnant for several reasons to the traditional Cherokee, who believed the West was the land of the moon, where you would find the souls of the dead and the blackness of death (Hudson, 1976, p. 132). The traditional Cherokee resisted the elites like Boudinot and his adversary Chief John Ross (McLoughlin, 1986, pp. 329-330). Ross was only one-eighteenth Cherokee (Ehle, 1988, p. 114), yet he tried to be the voice of the traditional Cherokee people. "A mixed-blood elite emerged that profited from owning slaves and developed commercial ventures such as mills, trading stores, taverns, ferry services, and turnpikes" (Norgren, 1996, p. 133).

Boudinot at least once wrote against slavery (Perdue, 1996, p. 11), even though he had listed slaves as a sign of civilization (p. 16). Yet he and Ross were both part of this elite that had been created among a people used to "community, sharing, harmony" (McLoughlin, 1986, pp. 329-330). Interestingly, Christian Gottlieb Priber came to the Cherokee in the 1700s with what could be considered communistic notions of building a utopia, but he was later arrested by Creek Indians and traders and died in jail (Malcomson, 2000, pp. 38-45). The Cherokee had an ancient idea of collectivity, as they did not like to collect wealth (p. 15). However, certain Cherokee later embraced Locke's ideas of personal property (p. 50), and racial separatism surfaced in the early 1700s (p. 51).

This shift from community to personal property, from traditional ways to civilized Christianity, fractured the Cherokee community. The writings of Elias Boudinot reflect one side of the matter. It seems almost hypocritical that Boudinot explicitly said in the prospectus first issue for the *Phoenix* that:

> In fine, we shall pay a sacred regard to truth, and avoid, as much as possible, that partiality to which we shall be exposed. In relating facts of a local nature, whether political, moral, or religious, we shall take care that exaggeration shall not be our crime. We shall also feel ourselves bound to correct all misstatements, relating to the present condition of the Cherokee (p. 94).

It could be argued that Boudinot did not speak for the majority of the Cherokee, but for the small elite group which he typified. This is perhaps the most troubling absence in the structure and content of his works. When he did speak for Cherokee, he spoke down to them. Or, he spoke to others in negative tones about his own people. This was perhaps his elitism at its worst – in turning from the white man, he turned from his own people.

Conclusion

Elias Boudinot was a complex man; he was a genius, yet at times arrogant in his genius; he was Cherokee, yet often white in behavior; he was civilized, yet led by an inner

sense of his Cherokee heritage; he was meek, yet angry; he was elitist, yet he tried to help his people to reach educational and spiritual goals. His words are lofty and majestic, and one wonders how much the average Cherokee understood his writings. *The Cherokee Pheonix* (later called *The Cherokee Pheonix and Indians' Advocate*) was published in both English and Cherokee. Citing a census of 1835, Perdue (1996) claims only 18 percent of Cherokee households had someone who could read English, 43 percent of households had someone who could read Cherokee, and 39 percent of households had no literate members at all (p. 63). However, it could be assumed that white elites throughout the country could read *The Cherokee Phoenix.*

The ideological critique of his works seemed so conclusive that using other examples would have become overly repetitive. Boudinot was elitist, and this elitism showed itself as civilization, Christianity, and Cherokeeness. The content and structure of the writings were remarkably consistent, except that the religious references seemed to trail off towards the end of his work. Perhaps the darkness of the final situation clouded his initial religious optimism.

More study needs to be done about Boudinot. His problems with freedom of information, with legal quarrels over the rights of the Native Americans, etc., would make interesting legal analyses. Also, this idea of elitism is just starting to surface in academic literature, especially in relation to Native American writes, so the concept needs to be further refined and connected to other biographical accounts of journalists. Hopefully, the current study provides a template for future research. In general, media scholars and historians tend to not quote extensively from Native studies. The works by McLoughlin and Hudson, for instance, were remarkably helpful in contextualizing this paper.

In conclusion, Boudinot should not be judged too harshly without further study and contemplation. Researchers need not discuss the work of Boudinot without considering the inner motivations that drove him. He was one of the most prominent, "successful" Natives in the 19th Century, in the view of many whites. It broke his heart that Cherokee men, women and children starved in the overrun hills of Appalachia, and it broke his heart that many died on the Trail of Tears. All he wanted was a better life for himself, his family, and his people, according to his writings. He wanted a better Cherokee people, though his philosophies and methods have come under scrutiny. In taking up the cause of Cherokee improvement, perhaps Boudinot was more Cherokee than many – including Boudinot himself – would want to admit.

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The Story of Depression:
An Investigation Into the Discourse of Depression
As Constructed in Direct-To-Consumer Antidepressants Advertising

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Abstract

This paper discusses how direct-to-consumer (DTC) antidepressants advertising frames depression and depicts men and women. The findings suggest that DTC advertising bio-chemically frames depression and depicts men as more stable and women as more vulnerable. The social implication of the findings is that by naturalizing the view that depression is a female problem, DTC advertising may reinforce social stereotypes of women and hide the socio-cultural conditions that possibly induce female depression.

The Story of Depression:

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Introduction

Advertising of antidepressants is nowadays easily found in popular consumer magazines. Direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising of prescription medications, however, is a recent phenomenon. Print executions came in the early 1980s (Henney, 2000), and federal law opened the door to broadcast advertising in 1997 by promulgating a set of clear guidelines (Krauskopf, 2001; Holmer, 2002). Since the 1997 change of regulation policies, the amount of money pharmaceutical companies spend on DTC advertising has been increasing, and in 2000, they spent twice as much money on DTC print advertising for prescription drugs in general as on advertising in medical journals, which had been the main venue of advertising messages before DTC promotion came (Rosenthal, Berndt, Donohue, Frank, & Epstein, 2002). This shift of weight illustrates the importance the pharmaceutical industry puts on the new channel of advertising.

Many reviewers of antidepressants advertising in medical journals have observed that they define normal reaction to everyday stress as needing medical intervention (Gardner, 2001; Stimson, 1975), privilege individualistic biomedical accounts of depression over psychosocial discourses (Brandt, 2001; Gardner, 2001; Goldman & Montagne, 1986; Stimson, 1975), and reproduce the stereotypical constructions of the female as supportive, domestic, and vulnerable (Brandt, 2001; Hansen, 1995; Lovdahl & Riska, 2000; Lovdahl, Riska, & Riska, 1999). However, it seems that the recent boom of DTC advertising has not revitalized discussion of the above critical issues. There seems to be virtually no systematic research that extends the issues to the

current trends characterized by consumer advertising.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to critically analyze advertising messages of antidepressant medications directly targeted toward consumers and discuss the messages they compositely convey regarding depression and recovery in people's lives and what kinds of ideas and expectations they form and disseminate about the lives of men and women and their social relations. The project consists of the following five sections. First, a brief background discussion will be provided on depression as an affective mental disorder and the approaches medical professionals employ to treat it. Second, the social constructionist approach to medical sociology will be reviewed as the guiding analytical framework to be employed to discuss the messages of DTC antidepressants advertising. Third, a literature review will illustrate how critics from various disciplines of social sciences have responded to the way the pharmaceutical industry frames depression and promotes antidepressants. Fourth, a basic statistical description will be provided and semiotic analysis will be conducted of the collected DTC antidepressants advertisements. Lastly, social implications of the messages conveyed by the advertising will be discussed. This section will mostly focus on the following two issues: first, how the stories frame depression in people's lives; and second, how it depicts the lives of men and women and their social relations.

Depression As an Affective Disorder: Definition, Diagnosis, and Treatment

> [Depression is] a term used to describe a normal state of mind as well as a serious mental disorder. Normal depression is a mood state everyone experiences that involves short-lived states of sadness, pessimism, a sense of inadequacy, and other negative feelings. It usually occurs in response to stressful or unpleasant experiences and generally does not exceed seven to ten days in length. A stricter definition of depression is a clinically diagnosed depressive disorder. Clinical depressive disorders are currently the most common of mental disorders … Clinical depression involves the same negative feelings as normal depression but in a more intense and long-lasting form. In addition, there are usually a number of physical symptoms

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(Britannica Student Encyclopedia, 2002).

The above definition connotes that depression as a normal state of mind and depression as a clinical mental disorder are inherently separable. However, as is easily inferable, it is never easy to draw a dividing line between the two categories to decide where the normal state ends and the serious disorder begins, and the difficulty of defining a state that incorporates a wide spectrum of mental and physical symptoms has been felt and commented on by many observers of mental disorders. Torrey (1997), for example, contends that the category of mental disorders have expanded to include common life problems. In the same vein, Healy (1997) argues depression may well be a disease, but it is also a broadly diagnosed illness that became popular only with the development and marketing of antidepressants.

In the United States, the official classification system most widely used to diagnose mental disorders is the most recent edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), which is viewed as a major repository of scientific knowledge and used by mental health professionals, the courts, and insurance providers (Gardner, 2001, pp.94-95; Weiss & Lonnquist, 1997, p.75). The 1994 released DSM-IV defines clinical depression as "a clinical course characterized by one or more depressive episodes, without a history of mania, and not due to medical condition or substance use or seasonal changes" (American Psychological Association, p.327). With a few situation-specific qualifications attached in addition, DSM-IV stipulates that the depressed subject must demonstrate five of the nine following symptoms for at least two weeks in order to receive a diagnosis of major depression:

1) Depressed mood (feeling sad or empty or seeming sad or tearful)
2) Greatly diminished interest or pleasure in all or almost all activities
3) Significant weight gain or loss without dieting (i.e. more than 5% body weight in a month)
4) Sleeping much less or much more than usual
5) Slowing down or speeding up activity that is observable by others
6) Fatigue or loss of energy
7) Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt, not merely self-reproach about being sick
8) Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness

9) Recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying) (American Psychological Association, 1994, p.327).

Depression, together with manic-depression, is the most common form of severe mood disorder, and as is generally the case with affective disorders, the rate of depression is consistently higher for women (Altshuler, Hendrick, & Burt, 1998; Nadelson & Dickstein, 1998; Weiss & Lonnguist, 1997). Possible causes of depression are considered to be many, and they are broadly classified into biological and psychosocial discourses. Biologically based theories focus on genetic predispositions and irregularities in brain chemistry, while psychosocial explanations attend to social situations and events that patients encounter and perceive to be distressing. Treatments, in parallel with the way causes are located, include psychotherapy, drug therapy, and electro-convulsive therapy. Most studies have found psychotherapy, especially the cognitive approach in which a therapist helps patients change distorted cognition of their experiences, to be most effective (Gardner, 2001, p.13) or at least as much so as drug therapy in moderate depression (Altshuler, Hendrick, & Burt, 1998).

Analytical Framework: Constructionist Medical Sociology and Discourses of Depression

Discourses of depression are formed through many sources, and advertising is an important source of knowledge on depression for both health professionals (Lovdahl & Riska, 2000; Valenstein, 1998) and laypeople (Sorofman, 1992; Terzian, 1999; Valenstein, 1998), especially since leading pharmaceutical companies recently started to heavily engage in DTC advertising. This increasing exposure to and dependence on advertising for knowledge is the fundamental rationale for critics to reflect upon its messages. One essential point to bear in mind, though, is that the text is not analyzed in a theoretical vacuum. Researchers need an analytical framework that tells what issues to look for in a given text. Considering a range of unique properties it entertains, the social constructionist approach to medical sociology is believed to be

the most insightful analytical framework to deconstruct prescription drug advertisements.

The constructionist approach to the sociology of knowledge can most briefly be summarized as the belief that knowledge is socially constructed (Nettleton, 1995, p.14). At this broad level, though, the approach appears to be misleadingly simple and self-evident, since one may well argue that no social scientist would dispute the idea that knowledge is socially contingent. However, the unique features of constructionism surface only when one considers the foci of concern constructionist researchers place in choosing and dealing with their specific research issues. Since knowledge is viewed as social construction, constructionist scholars attend to the process in which it is formed, and explore the ways that a set of hegemonic socio-cultural underpinnings of a society, whether material or ideological, are reinforced, modified, and mediated by knowledge. They apply this perspective even to what used to be perceived by many as purely objective categories such as the knowledge of disease and the body and its application by medical practitioners. The production of medical knowledge that laypeople entertain also concerns scholars. They explore how laypeople form, share, and orient everyday knowledge towards particular problems through social interaction. The major issues of constructionist medical sociology can be outlined under the following five categories.

First, the constructionist medical sociology problematizes reality. It considers disease entities as not simply real but also as products of social reasoning and practices. As Bury (1986, p.137) observes, it views the objects of medical science as inventions just as much as discoveries of the stable realities of the human body. Second, it views "scientific facts" as contingent upon discursive structures and practices into which they are embedded. There is no autonomous fact per se passively waiting to be discovered. On the contrary, facts are inseparably entrenched into the whole range of discursive practices that surrounds the 'discoveries' of them, such as initiation of searching, confirmation, interpretation, and application, which are skewed towards the

biochemical paradigm, the predominant approach upon which the medical scientific community is built. The third proposition is that medical knowledge mediates social relations. Medical knowledge and practices are not only one possible and arbitrarily constructed system of responses to conditions of the human body and mind, but also might be so constructed that they reflect and reproduce the dominant modes of relations between men and women, doctor and patient, and rich and poor. The last dimension is that medical knowledge medicalizes people's daily experiences by claiming expertise about more and more areas of life, which previously were not defined as medical problems, such as aging, birthing, and menstruation. The resulting increasing dependence upon medical expertise strips laypeople of their abilities to cope with their problems, and doctors and pharmaceutical companies increasingly market easily accessible biomedical solutions to an increasingly broader array of everyday life problems of social origin. Constructionists term this overall process medicalization, a popular concept closely related to their attention to the medical institution's accelerating accumulation of economic resources and interpretation of the overall medical progress as one in which the dominant social classes gain control over the powerless (Bury, 1986, pp.137-150; Nettleton, 1995, pp.14-28).

Critics' Responses to the Predominant Discourse of Depression

"Approximately ten million Americans experience a clinical depression each year. One fourth of all women and one eighth of all men will suffer at least one episode or occurrence of depression in their lifetime" (Copeland, 2001, p.8-9), and recent research adds that the ratio of female depression patients to their male counterparts has increased almost to 3 to1 (Copeland, 2001, p.8-9; Gardner, 2001, p.12). The rate of population diagnosed as depressed has been increasing, and the ratio of patients treated with prescription drugs also increased from 37.3 percent in 1987 to 74.5 percent in 1997, while the use of psychotherapy declined slightly despite

its well-recognized effectiveness (Kotulak, 2002; Vedantam, 2002).

Regarding the above upward trends of depression characterized by a higher rate of diagnosis, an increasing ratio of female patients, and increasing dependence on drug treatments, many observers, although not all of them explicitly state that they follow the constructionist paradigm, have expressed concerns that resonate with its analytical framework. Some have commented on the problematic nature of the illness category as it applies to too broad a spectrum of mental conditions. Torrey (1997)'s reference to depression's incorporation of such a wide range of illnesses as indicating the expansion of mental disorders to include common life problems, and Valenstein (1998)'s comprehensive account of how the pharmaceutical industry promotes not only drugs but also biochemical theories of mental illness to both doctors and the public reflects critics' growing concern about medicalization of increasingly wider areas of life.

Critics also question the predominance of the bio-psychiatric approach, which frames mental disorders as "those arising from internal causes that result in impaired social functioning" (Weiss & Lonnquist, 1997, p.75), over at least equally convincing systems of alternative discourses. The bio-psychiatric logic is currently considered as 'the' source of knowledge on depression (Gardner, 2001, pp.52-53), although "the percentage of patients who are helped by psychotherapeutic drugs is much lower than commonly claimed"(Valentein, 1998, p.165). Valentein (1998) explains the apparent paradox in the following statement:

> The truth is that we still do not know what causes any mental disorder or how drugs sometimes help patients get better. Yet, despite this, the theory that mental disorder arises from biochemical imbalance is widely accepted. I believe this is partly because few people, including mental health professionals, have the time, inclination, or background to critically examine the [biochemical] evidence and partly because powerful special interest groups have influenced the way people think about drug treatment and mental disorders...The pharmaceutical industry spends enormous sums to influence the opinions and behavior of both physicians and the public, and the effectiveness of their marketing strategies cannot be overestimated (Valenstein, 1998, p.165).

The biochemical approach fits in well with the US society's deep-entrenched cultural paradigm that favors the individual over the social in terms of both accounting for a given phenomenon

and finding ways to respond to it. Many contend that the approach also enables the government to forgo the wealth of research about a relationship between individuals' environment and their health status and respond to what discourses there are about the effects of various social-structural conditions such as poverty and unemployment in ways that are innocuous to the interests of the medical institution (Weiss & Lonnquist, 1997, p.116). Others argue that the dominance of this approach de-historicizes and de-politicizes the causes of the illness by framing, and providing technical and arguably ephemeral solutions to, problems that can be equally considered as social in origin (Nettleton, 1995, p.25). Of consequences of the discursive structure, Gardner (2001) argues:

> consumers are led toward bio-psychiatric treatment - especially antidepressants - by depression treatment propaganda (made available to them through doctors and consumer depression sources) suggesting that depression in general should be treated with bio-psychiatric therapies … numerous studies, including the most recent large scale NIH study, contend that though major depression is best treated with a combined treatment of anti-depressants and therapy for many, minor depression is well-treated by psychotherapy alone. In most cases of diagnosed depression, however, anti-depressants are prescribed as part of the treatment package (pp.12-13).

Once the dominant paradigm that views depression as bio-chemically derived is questioned, it naturally follows that one should also question the fact that women have been the major recipients of the major depression diagnosis. It is widely accepted that women's major depression rates are twice as high as men's (Altshuler, et. al., 1998; Annandale, 1998; Copeland, 2001; Gardner, 2001). The biomedical paradigm, by exclusively focusing on chemical irregularities while ignoring possible social psychological forces that might lead to such irregularities, may instill the impression that women are inherently more vulnerable to depression. The facts about chemical irregularities and the high rate of depression among females, discovered and confirmed mostly by followers of bio-psychiatry, could be considered as revealing the reality of depression as much as sealing off equally convincing accounts attending to its socio-cultural nature. One might further consider that they reinforce and reconstitute the notion of women as vulnerable and continuously exposed to the risk by generating the belief that

the source of distress lies within them (Copeland, 2001, p.2). Carmen and others (1981) contend in the same vein that "it would be surprising if the pervasive cultural biases that denigrate women were not found in the training of mental health professionals and the delivery of mental health services"(p.1325). Broverman and others (1970) find that clinicians are more likely to suggest that healthy women are more submissive, less independent, less adventurous, less competitive, more excitable in minor crises, more emotional, and more easily hurt than healthy men. Researchers have also found that clinicians have shown higher anti-depressant prescription rates for women (Copeland, 2001). The strikingly contrasting conceptions of mentally healthy men and women's psychological composition are conducive to the belief that women are more vulnerable to depression. In other words, "personality traits and characteristics associated with being feminine are in themselves depressogenic"(Scarf, 1980, p.359).

As has been mentioned beforehand, many reviewers of antidepressants advertising in medical journals point out that the above critical points generally hold true. They conclude that the messages privilege individualistic biomedical accounts of depression over psychosocial discourses (Brandt, 2001; Gardner, 2001; Goldman & Montagne, 1986; Stimson, 1975) and describe women as more supportive, domestic, and vulnerable (Brandt, 2001; Hansen, 1995; Lovdahl & Riska, 2000; Lovdahl, Riska, & Riska, 1999). The remaining of this project will extend discussion of the above issues to DTC antidepressants advertising.

Data And Method of Analysis

As of 1999, the top antidepressants are Prozac (Eli Lilly), with its approximate market share of 35 percent, followed by Zoloft (Pfizer), with 28.7 percent, and Paxil (SmithKline), with 26.3 percent (Goetzl, 1999). All Prozac, Zoloft, and Paxil advertisements carried by Readers Digest and Time from January 1997 and March 2003 were collected for analysis. The main

reason for selecting those particular magazines is their high popularity for both men and women (Mediamark, 1999). The relatively low gender-skewness of their readership bases is judged to entitle them to represent advertisers' general constructions of the two genders and thus deemed to be proper for discussing gender issues.

Semiotic analysis is the major analytic tool to be used for textual analysis. Though not a mainstream approach in the American tradition of communication studies (Frey, Anderson, & Friedman, 1998), its utility in analyzing the text in an in-depth manner to dismantle the layers of strategies used to manipulate signs and ultimately reconstruct the fundamental semiotic structure of messages that underlies the generation of meanings is well respected. A basic statistical description will be additionally used to provide a clear overview of DTC antidepressants advertising.

Analyzing the Text: Statistical Description

The strength of statistical analysis is that one can quantify textual elements to gain a bird's-eye view of the general picture that the texts compositely constitute. It confers a visual contour upon an otherwise amorphous aspect of reality. This section of analysis centers on how DTC antidepressants advertising collectively answers the following seven questions.

1. What is the total number of male-targeted and female-targeted advertisements?
2. How often do male or female figures appear?
3. How often is each gender described as depressed or depression survivors?
4. When both genders appear, which of them is depicted as depressed or depression survivors?
5. What kinds of role-contexts are associated with the depressed men and women?
6. How often are psychosocial causes of depression referred to, whether verbally or visually?
7. How often are psychosocial consequences of depression referred to, whether verbally or visually?

The total number of Prozac, Zoloft, and Paxil advertisements carried by the two magazines between January 1997 and March 2003 is 31. They are more or less evenly distributed when sorted out by the year they appear. 19 of them are targeted towards both genders and thus about 61% of advertisements could be considered as gender-neutral. Among those targeted

towards one gender, though, female-targeted advertisements outnumber their counterparts by 10 to 2 (See Table 1).

Table 1
Number of Advertisements by Target Gender

Male-Targeted	Female-Targeted	Gender-Neutral	Total
2	10	19	31

Male figures outnumber female images by 31 to 24. This apparently contradicts the expected female-skewed trends. However, only 4 out of the 31 male figures are depressed or depression survivors, whereas 20 out of the 24 female figures are depicted that way. Depiction of depression survivor as a coding category was applied when the same figures appeared in the same advertisement and only one of them was depicted as depressed. In other words, although male figures appear more often, only 13% of them are related with depression, while their counterparts are almost always depicted that way. This fits in well with another finding that the majority of male figures appear in female-targeted advertisements (See Table 2), which is illustrated by the attached Paxil advertisement (See Appendix 3).

Table2
Number of Male and Female Figures Depicted as Depressed or Depression Survivors by Target Gender of Ads

	Male Figures in All Ads (N=31)			Female Figures in All Ads (N=24)		
	Depressed	Survivor	Depression-Free	Depressed	Survivor	Depression-Free
Male-Targeted Ads	2	2	0	0	0	0
Female-Targeted Ads	0	0	27	10	10	4
Gender-Neutral Ads	0	0	0	0	0	0

In the 8 cases where men and women appear together, only women are depicted as depressed. Concerning the role-context issue, the 2 male-targeted advertisements are both set in the work-

related context category by verbally relating depression with such contexts as promotion and job satisfaction. On the contrary, 5 of 10 female-targeted advertisements are situated in the family-involving context by visually relating depression with such contexts as the female figure's emotional isolation from her husband and son (See Appendix 3). Only one of them is related with work (See Table 3).

Table3)
Number of Advertisements by Context of Advertisement

	Family	Work	Unidentifiable	Total
Male-Targeted	0	2	0	2
Female-Targeted	5	1	4	10
Gender-Neutral	0	0	19	19
Total	5	3	23	31

Concerning the causes and consequences of depression, all 31 advertisements mention biochemical causes, while only 13 of them mention psychosocial causes such as divorce and a death in the family. On the contrary, 19 advertisements indicate psychosocial consequences either verbally or visually. Suffering relationship is most often mentioned as social consequence. Both psychosocial causes and consequences are referred to mostly through verbal signs.

Analyzing the Text: Semiotic Analysis

Text consists of signs, and the central concern of semiotics is to investigate into how signs are selected and organized to lead individuals to read a limited range of meanings into the text. What follows is a summary of the overall perspective of the semiotic textual analysis laid out by one of the founding fathers of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure.

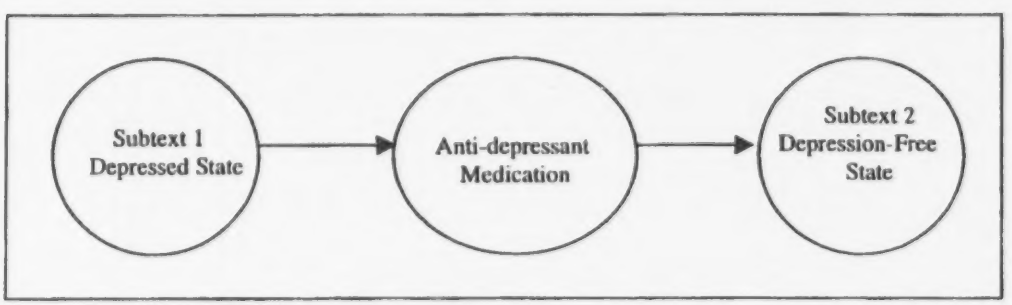
> De Saussure defined two ways in which signs are organized into codes. The first is by paradigm. A paradigm is a set of signs from which the one to be used is chosen. The set of shapes for road signs - square, round, or triangular - forms a paradigm; so does the set of symbols that can go within them. Saussure's second way is the syntagm. A syntagm is the message into which the chosen signs are

> combined. A road sign is a syntagm, a combination of the chosen shape with the chosen symbol. In language, we can say that vocabulary is the paradigm, and a sentence is a syntagm. So all messages involve selection (from a paradigm) and combination (into a syntagm) (Fiske, 1990, pp.56-57).

In other words, understanding the structural base from which a text emerges lies in analyzing how each sign is given a meaning in paradigmatic and syntagmatic relation with others. For example, in the sentence "I like you," the full meaning is reached only when both the paradigmatic choices - "I" as distinct from he, she, they, etc., "like" as distinct from detest, hate, love, etc., and "you" as distinct from your sister, friend, etc. - and the syntagmatic structure - the specific sequential combination of the chosen paradigmatic units of I, you, and like - are taken into consideration (Fiske, 1990; Berger, 1991). The foregoing discussion of paradigm and syntagm is one of the most fundamental bases of the semiotic analysis of the text, and bases the analysis of antidepressants advertising that this author will conduct.

A careful analysis of advertising has resulted in the conclusion that the prototypical semiotic structure that underlies each persuasive message consists of the following three separable components: depressive state (subtext 1) and depression-free state (subtext 2) and an antidepressant medication that bridges them (See Figure 1).

Figure 1:
Structure of Anti-Depressants Advertising

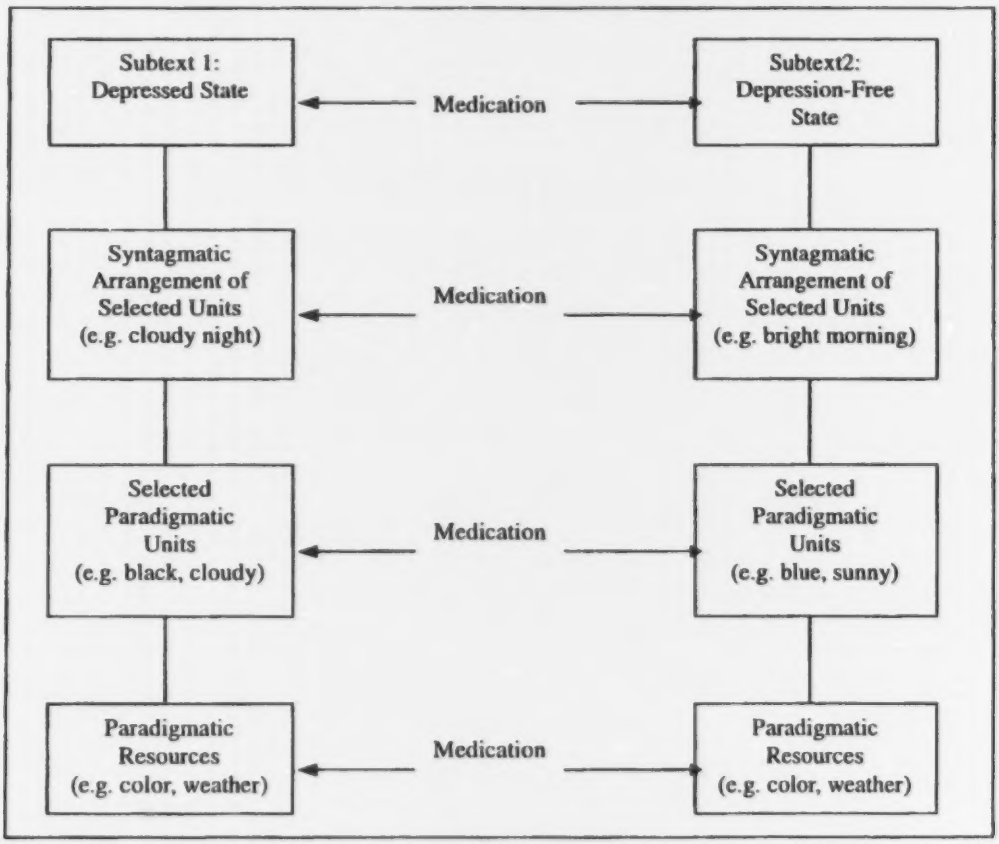


Each advertising message has a structure in which a depressed person (subtext1), with the help of the promoted medication, reaches a depression-free state (subtext 2). Psychosocial consequences

of the depressed state such as suffering interpersonal relationship, isolation from family members, and sagging job satisfaction are 62% likely to be referred to in subtext 1, while psychosocial causes of it such as divorce or a death in the family are 42% likely to be discussed. The account of psychotherapeutic treatment has no place in the box. It is always cut out of it to give the drug therapy a monopolistic position in the discourse of recovery.

Based upon de Saussure's layout of the way the text is structured, subtext 1 and 2 can be further deconstructed to shed light on how the text is paradigmatically and syntagmatically organized. Figure 2 is a diagrammatic model that visualizes how the text is constituted.

Figure 2
De-construction of Subtext 1 and 2



Paradigmatic resources, the last box in this model, point to the imaginary exhaustive list of paradigms and their units available to be used for message production. Paradigms and their units

often used in the collected advertisements are enlisted in Table 4.

Table 4
Paradigms and Paradigmatic Units Mostly Used

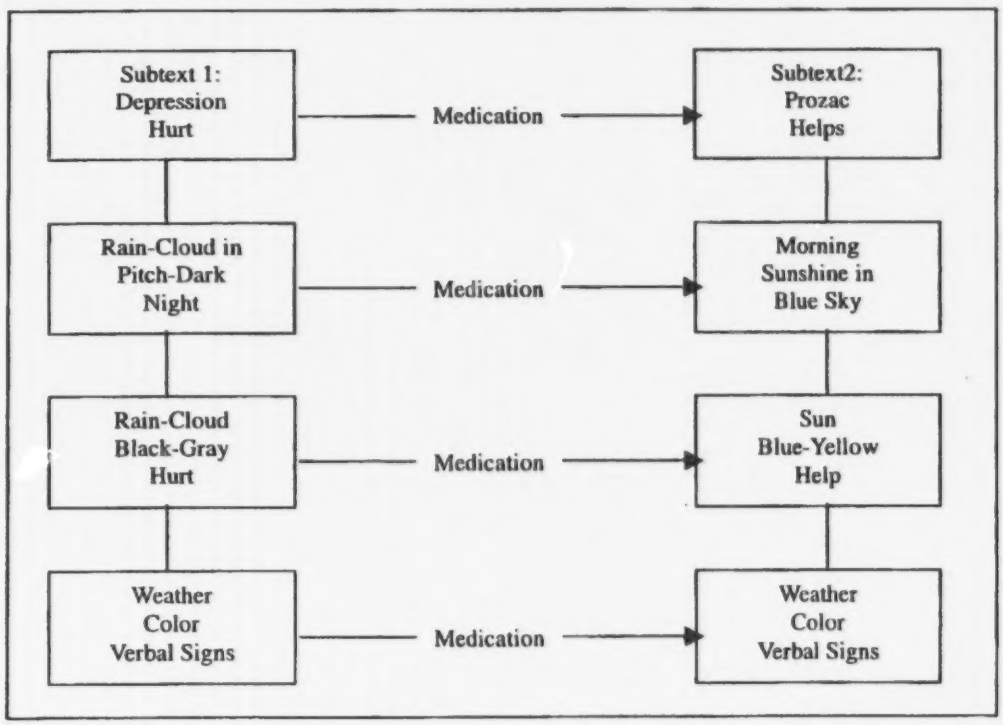
Paradigms	Paradigmatic Units
Body Contact	kiss, holding, hugging, lack of contact, etc
Facial Expression	anxious, wooden, white, smiling, empty, etc
Color	red, violet, orange, yellow, white, black, blue, etc
Posture	tense, leaning, impatient, curling, folding arms, etc
Physical state of an object	Broken, firm, full-blown, desiccated, round, sharp, etc
Weather condition	sunny, cloudy, raining, etc
Time of day	morning, night, afternoon, etc.

A fairly noticeable pattern is that the two subtexts in each advertisement are in an oppositional relationship in that they symbolize the opposite mental states. They are also analogous to mirror images for each other in that they draw from the same set of paradigms but the units sorted out from each paradigm are often conceptually pitted against each other. All Prozac advertisements, which constitute 35.5% of all, satisfy every aspect of this model: that is, they consist of a medication that straddles two sets of subtexts that consist of oppositional paradigmatic units selected from the same paradigms (See Appendix 1). Most Paxil advertisements, which make up 29%, closely follow the model, but the emphasis is usually put on subtext 1, which indicates the depressed state (See Appendix 3). All Zoloft advertisements, which constitute 35.5%, further deviate from the model. The illustrated transition from chemical imbalance to balance assimilates the dichotomy between depressed and depression free states, but the main character, the white, egg-shaped figure, is always placed in subtext 1 (See Appendix 4). However, they do not have to be viewed as entirely deviating from the prototypical dichotomy. The oppositional layout apparently missing from Zoloft advertising could be

considered as latent in the function of language itself. "Where there is choice, there is meaning, and the meaning of what is chosen is determined by what is not chosen"(Fiske, 1990, p.58). A woman's sad look can generate a meaning only when it presupposes the actual or hypothetical existence of her happy smile. Therefore, the apparently missing dichotomy is hypothesized, according to the linguistic basis of semiotics, as read into the structure by the decoder.

A few examples of application will further illuminate how the prototypical structure conditions the range of meanings that interpreters are expected to read into the text. Advertising for Prozac, the best selling and most widely promoted of the three medications, perfectly fits the model. Prozac advertising has several variations, and each of them depends on some of the following series of paradigms: color, indicator of weather condition, state of an object, and verbal signs.

Figure 3:
De-construction of Prozac Advertisement (See Appendix 1)



As Figure 3 illustrates, the attached Prozac advertisement's subtext 1 consists of the following selected paradigmatic units: a gray cloud, raindrops, and verbal signs, all embedded in a pitch-dark background (See Appendix 1). Subtext 2 consists of a yellow sun, a light red halo surrounding it, and verbal signs. The backdrop is light blue. The two subtexts are separated in a clear manner by page division.

The range of intended meanings is almost unmistakable. In western representation practices, the five colors used in the text have the following connotations.

> Black: evil, impure, vicious, sullen, indecent, immoral, gloomy, etc.
> Gray: dull, misty, nebulous, old, gloomy, etc.
> Blue: hope, sky, paradise, calm, gloomy, etc.
> Red: blood, passion, sensual, fertile, angry, etc.
> Yellow: lively, sunshine, happy, peaceful, tranquil, etc (Danesi, 2002, p.41).

Cloud, rain, and sun are the contexts in which the colors are used, and they further narrow down the range of the colors' connotations. Cloud, an indicator of weather condition, often connotes blemish, confusion, and worry, while sun does glory and cheer. Thus, for example, black color in the text is more likely to connote sullen and gloomy than immoral and evil, and blue is sure to mean hope, not gloomy. The shape of the raindrops also draws attention. They are shaped like circular cones, with the sharp ends pointing downward, towards the verbal signs, where the reader's eyes are likely to halt for a while. The shaping and arrangement of the raindrops fit in well with the verbal signs that read, "Depression hurts." In addition, use of sharp images carries over to other print executions of Prozac advertisements in such forms as pieces of a broken vase and twigs of a leafless tree (See Appendix 2). The composite message and impression that the text is most likely to instill in the reader's mind is that depression, not life, hurts, and Prozac helps get back one's life instantly and painlessly like the morning sun pushing out a rain-laden night cloud. This dichotomous structure effectively seals off psychosocial discourses. Even when they are mentioned, it is always made sure that more emphasis is put on biochemical causes such

as the malfunctioning of neurotransmitter. Furthermore, in all Prozac advertisements it is clearly stated that one can never will out of depression, implying that one can only drug out of it.

The attached Paxil advertisement is also based on the same structure but in a slightly modified form in the sense that subtext 1 predominates over subtext 2 in size (See Appendix 3). The paradigms used are facial expression, degree of physical isolation, physical contact, verbal signs, and background color. What divides subtext 1 and 2 is now the dividend of backdrop colors. Subtext 1 comprises a woman with an empty facial expression and a blank stare that seems to reach nowhere. The other two people, who are supposed to be her husband and son, are giving her a worried look. She is spatially separated from her family, and what lies in-between is the following series of symptoms: depressed mood, loss of interest, sleep problems, agitation, etc. The visual layout, in connection with the rhetorical question "What's standing between you and your life," conveys the sense that it is depression that caused the family problem, not the other way around. Human figures in subtext 1 are all placed against a dark gray backdrop. It gets darker where the depressive symptoms are located. Her folded arms, a gesture that often connotes passivity and lack of interest, renders the isolation more salient. Subtext 2 has light blue and yellow backdrops and depicts the woman hugging her son, both of whom happily smiling. The key message most likely to be conveyed through this advertisement is that depression causes women to suffer sleep problems, agitation, restlessness, etc., and thus separates them from family members. Paxil helps get their life back, which means returning to their family. It is important to note that what pushes the plot proceed from subtext 1 to subtext 2 is not the collective efforts of the family to help her get over the series of medical problems but consumption of the right brand of medication.

Summary

The results of the two sections of analysis indicate that the concerns expressed by constructionist medical sociologists and those who examined advertising of antidepressants in medical journals hold true of DTC advertising. First, the results point out that the hypothesis that gender stereotypes are reproduced in DTC advertising is generally confirmed. About 62% of advertisements are targeted towards both genders and have no gender-specific visual or verbal notion. However, when it comes to the ones that target one gender, women are 5 times more likely to be targeted, and this ratio is higher than the figure presented by even the most recent research indicating that the ratio of clinically depressed women to depressed men increased to 3 to 1 (Copeland, 2001; Gardner, 2001), not to mention the most common notion that views the ratio as 2 to 1 (Altshuler et. al., 1998). 31 male images and 24 female images appear. Only 4 men of them are related with depression either as sufferers or survivors, while all but 4 women are depicted that way. This means when women appear, they are almost always related with depression. Furthermore, when both genders appear, it is always women that are depicted as depressed. Another important finding is that only female-targeted advertising is associated with the home and the family, though this occurs only 5 times.

Second, as illustrated by Figure 1, 2, and 3, the semiotic structures that underlie anti-depressants advertising messages seal off alternative and equally convincing discourses about depression, especially when it comes to discussing how to treat depression. Psychosocial causes of depression are much less likely to be mentioned than psychosocial consequences. Visual elements make no mention of psychosocial causes or psychotherapeutic treatments. All Prozac advertisements do mention that depression might have social causes by stating that "depression can be caused by stressful life events, like divorce or a death in the family"(See Appendix 1), but concerning recovery, they do not fail to downplay the individual's abilities to cope with their life problems and also the importance of psychosocial approaches by stating, "Some people think

you can just will yourself out of a depression. That's not true"(See Appendix 1). Zoloft and Paxil advertisements make no mention of social psychosocial causes, not to speak of alternative treatments. The biochemical discourses, in terms of causes and consequences, are discussed in all advertisements and constitute central themes. This is well understandable, since pharmaceutical companies' number one priority is obviously to sell drugs. The overall social implication, however, is alarming, since DTC advertising seems to contribute to the continuing predominance of the biochemical discourses of depression, recovery, and mental health in people's lives, and help them pervade and tap into increasingly wider areas of our lives.

Discussion: Social Implications of DTC Antidepressants Advertising

When one synthesizes the bio-chemical paradigm with the belief that depression is a female problem, both of which constitute dominant themes in DTC antidepressants advertising, the overall message is unmistakable: women are inherently weaker and that's why they are more vulnerable to depression. To naturalize the view that depression is a female disease reinforces in turn the stereotypes that women are inherently more submissive, less independent, more excitable in minor crises, and more easily hurt than men.

Another crucial notion is that many observers warn that the biomedical paradigm has never been clearly substantiated. It is generally agreed that chemical irregularities and depression symptoms are interrelated. The causal direction, though, has not been substantiated: that is, the bio-psychiatric interpretation that one feels depressed because of the chemical imbalance and the reversed logic that the irregularities occur because of one's depressed mood equally make sense (Gardner, 2001; Valenstein, 1998). This is where the socio-cultural implication of the bio-chemical medicalization of depression is most alarming. When one adopts the psychosocial approach, s/he comes up with a completely different picture of the general upward trends of

depression that characterize the contemporary US society. If one's environment is the primary source of depression, the number of people diagnosed as depressed has tripled, and the ratio of female depression patients is increasing, that may mean not only that our social environment is getting more conducive to depression but also that social conditions of women's lives are at least twice more depressogenic than those of men's lives. To frame and treat the illness bio-chemically, therefore, means not only that the label of vulnerability continues to be branded upon women. That also means that the more depressogenic nature of their social environment is hidden from the view and thus remains intact. The increasing use of prescription drugs, therefore, may be viewed as a vehicle though which individuals are guided to better adjust to and maintain the very social conditions that cause their depression. The primary social category that is called upon to pay the most toll to keep this potentially depression-inducing social system alive and well is, without question, women.

Suggestions for Further Research

This project mostly discusses how DTC antidepressants advertising frames depression bio-chemically and depicts men and women stereotypically. It is based on data gathered from the 1997 to 2003 issues of Time and Readers' Digest, and thus covers the entire time span since the year DTC advertising became a popular marketing strategy.

However, its findings are limited to advertising in the two relatively gender-neutral magazines. A more comprehensive picture will emerge only when one collects data from a wider range of periodicals. For example, to gather and analyze advertisements in male-targeted consumers such as Men's Health, female-targeted ones such as Ladies' Home Journal, and medical journals such as The New England Journal of Medicine, and compare the results by periodical type will present deeper insight into pharmaceutical companies' marketing strategies.

Another limitation is inherent in textual analysis as an area of social scientific research. The fundamental rationale for paying attention to the text is that the results, such as the ways the two genders are depicted, have some kind of impact on how the reader thinks and feels about either depression or men and women. Textual analysis, quantitative or qualitative, is used to discuss a series of meanings that the audience potentially reads into the text, but it is beyond its discursive scope to ascertain that the reader does get such meanings out of the text. Therefore, the initiative taken by textual analysis should lead to empirical audience research to explore how DTC advertising shapes the reader's beliefs on depression and antidepressants in the lives of men and women.

There is a large body of literature on the general effectiveness of DTC advertising. For example, a survey suggests that not only patients are being increasingly involved in the pharmaceutical selection process, but also nearly 75% of consumers who make requests for a specific brand of medication receive desired prescriptions from doctors, and the ratio of consumers who recall a specific prescription drug from advertising and request it is increasing (Foote & Etheredge, 2000; Pinto, Pinto, & Barber, 1998; Rosenthal, et. al., 2002). However, the literature is about DTC advertising in general, not specifically about antidepressants. Moreover, it only discusses whether DTC advertising creates intended behavioral impacts, that is, whether it makes people diagnose themselves and request a specific brand. It rarely discusses how the reader processes information in the advertisement and what kinds of messages s/he gets out of the text. The scant amount of literature that deals with audience interpretation discusses mostly the educational value of DTC advertisement. An example is research about whether it helps the reader recognize symptoms, success rate of the drug, necessary duration of use, etc (Holmer, 2002; Wolfe, 2002).

The above issues are important, and thus deserve attention. However, there seems to be

no systematic research discussing equally significant, but a wider range of social issues such as whether consumers recognize, and how they respond to, the pharmaceutical industry's biochemical framing of depression, and how the stereotypical images of men and women in DTC advertising interact with their preexisting conceptions of the two genders.

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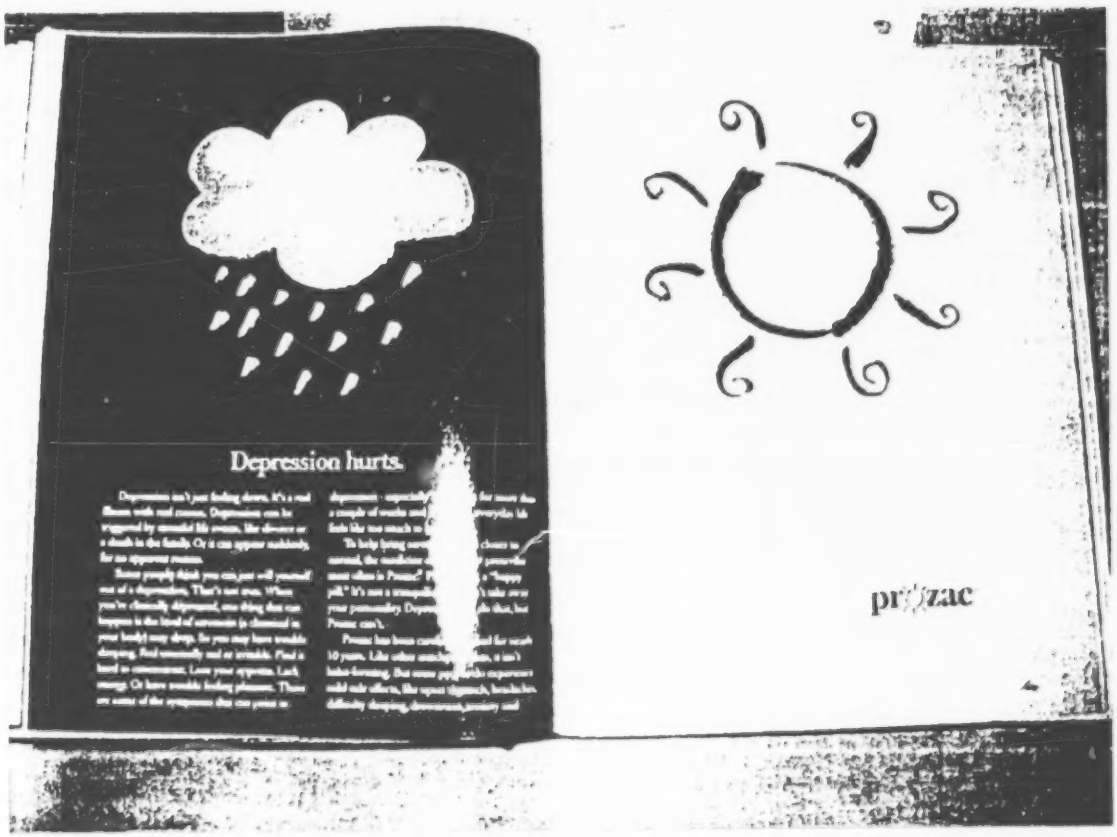
Appendix 1: A Prozac Advertisement
Time, July 21, 1997, p.18



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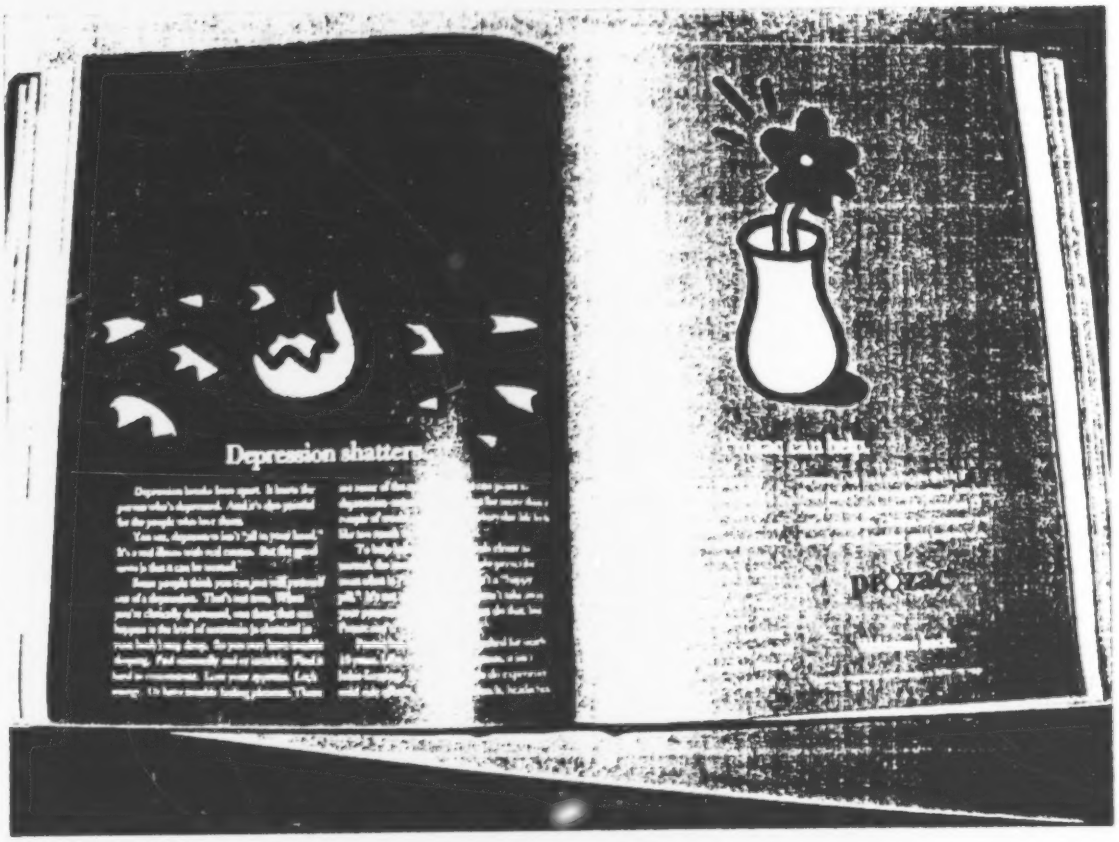
Appendix 2: A Prozac Advertisement
Time, October 13, 1997, p.94



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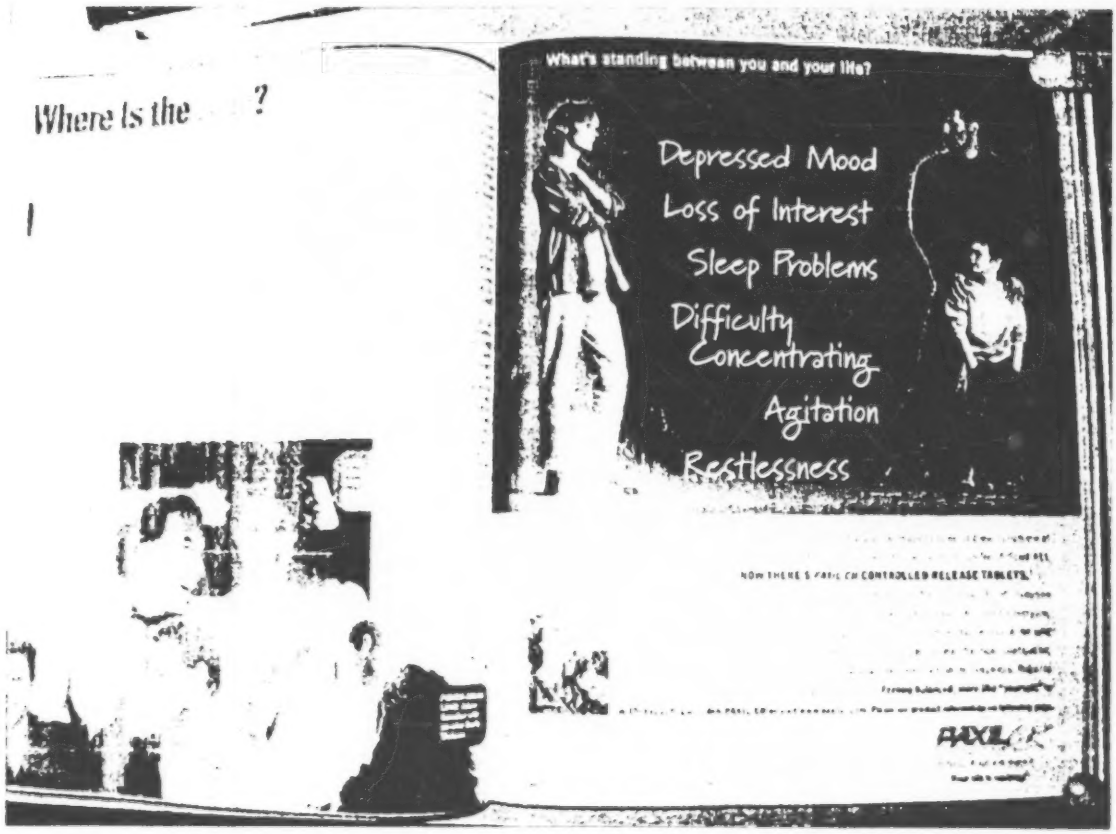
Appendix 3: A Paxil Advertisement
Time, Oct 21, 2002, p.67



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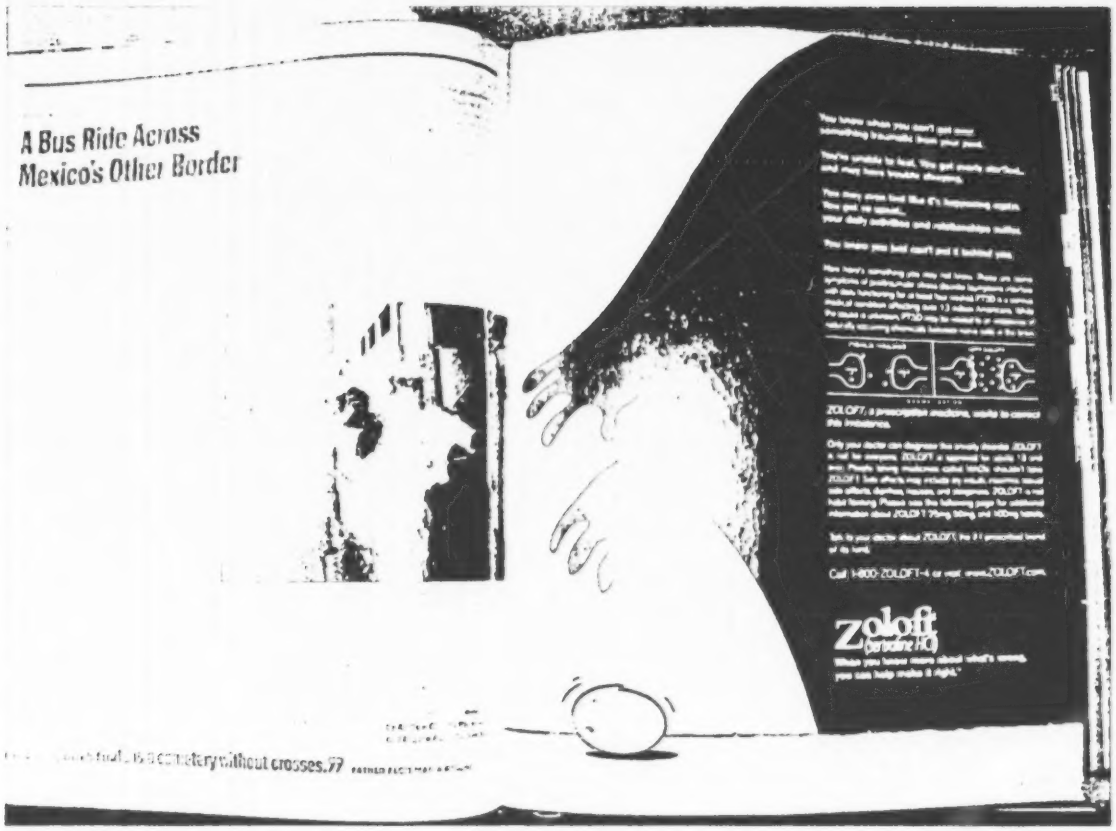
Appendix 4: A Zoloft Advertisement
Time, August 13, 2001, p.7



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